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SPECIAL SECTION

ENERGY-EFFICIENT WINDOWS AND DOORS

See page 65

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

SEPTEMBER 2009

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Builder

VOLUME 32 ISSUE 9 SEPTEMBER 2009

FEATURES

Setting Out

Builder startups are beginning to crop up around the country, and this month we take a look at a few of these new enterprises. Starting fresh and with little or no excess baggage, most are taking a conservative approach with their business models, knowing that both the times and buyers have changed. They've done their homework and are hard at work carving out niches for themselves that will allow them to start small but strong, and with plenty of opportunities for growth. 58

Special Windows & Doors Section

Green With a View

Saving energy and money are key issues for many home buyers these days. The six projects featured in this special section illustrate just how big a role windows play in making a home eco-friendly and energy efficient. Whether it's their strategic placement, advanced technology to control heat gain, or low-E glass coatings, these windows make a positive impact. It doesn't hurt that they look great, too. 66

Energy Stars

With oil prices on the rise again, the cost of heating and cooling their new homes will figure prominently in your customers' buying decisions. In this special products section, we offer a collection of some of the most energy-efficient windows and doors on the market today (and some related products, as well). Many of the products featured are Energy Star rated or eligible for the stimulus bill tax credit. 72

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COVER PHOTO: CELIN SERBO

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WHAT'S NEW ON: WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM

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BUILDER Blog Network

Check out our blogs at www.builderonline.com/builder-blogs/builderbloggers.aspx to read the opinions and observations of a variety of experts from the home building industry, including:

Boyce Thompson, editorial director of the BUILDER group of magazines, who draws on his years of experience covering home building to tackle diverse industry topics twice each week.

Ted Cushman, a freelance writer who offers insightful, practical coverage of home building techniques, building science, and housing economics.

Chuck Shinn, of the Shinn Group of Cos., who advises builders and manufacturers on how they can improve the performance of their companies and maximize their profits.

BUILDER TV

Two new episodes of BUILDER TV (www.builderonline.com/buildertv/) premier in September:

- "Who's Got Your Back?"—Keith Ferrazzi, founder and CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, discusses how to transform your organization with the help of peer-to-peer support.
- "CEO Panel"—Highlights from a panel discussion led by Boyce Thompson at this year's BUILDER 100 conference. CEOs answer tough questions and predict what's to come.

Local Leaders

In this issue, you'll find a pullout poster of the 2008 Local Leaders, the top 10 builders in the top 50 markets. Our online version of the list is continually updated at: www.builderonline.com/local-markets/local-leaders-top-10-builders-in-top-50-markets.aspx

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND NEWS FOR BUILDER ONLINE?

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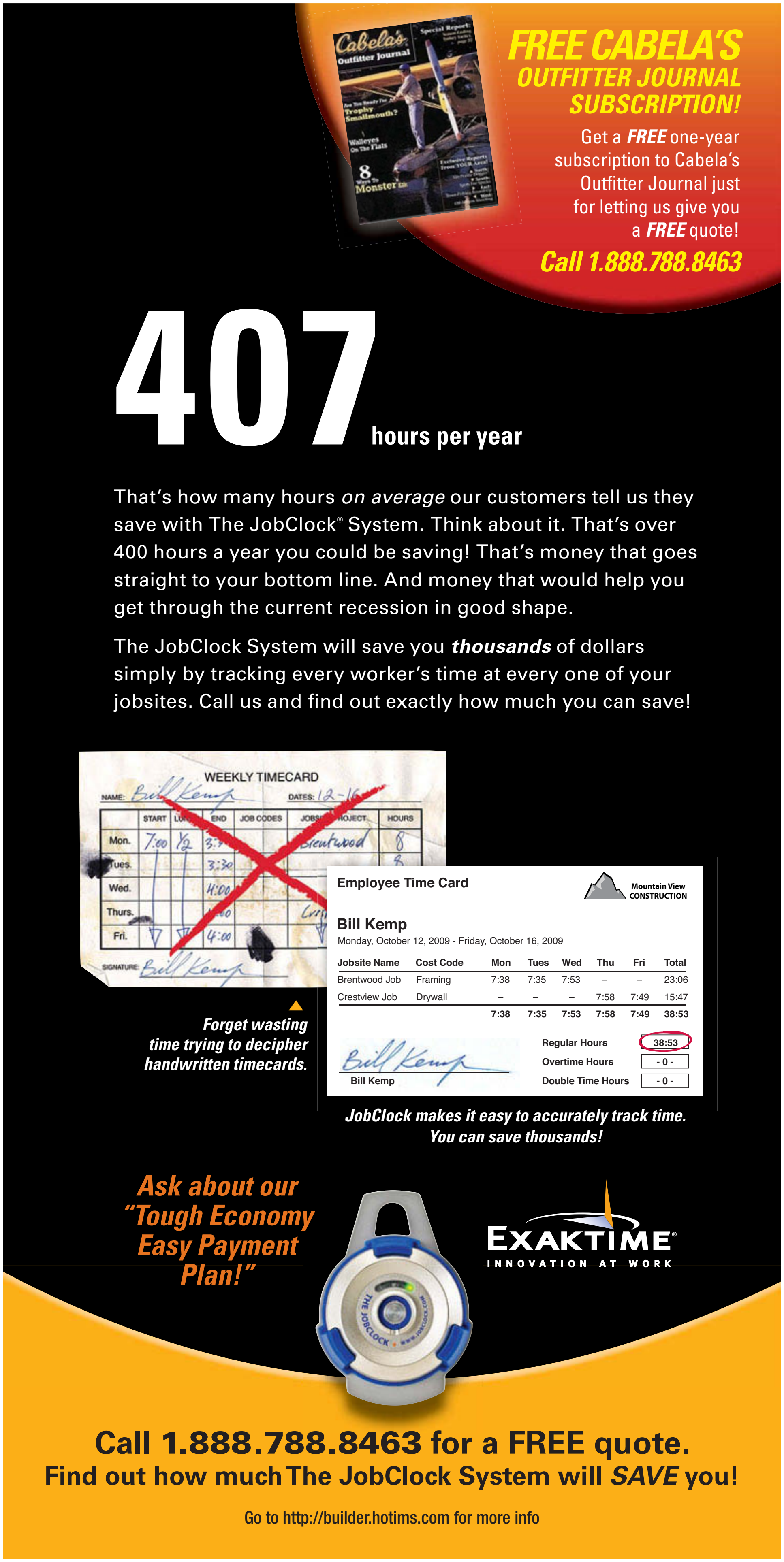

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BOYCE THOMPSON | Editorial Director • 202-736-3455
DENISE DERSIN | Editor in Chief • 202-736-3341
ERIN MAYES | Art Director • emayes@hanleywood.com
DEBORAH LEOPOLD | Managing Editor • 202-736-3380
TERESA BURNEY | Senior Editor • 352-735-0287
JOHN CAULFIELD | Senior Editor • 732-257-6319
NIGEL F. MAYNARD | Senior Editor • 202-736-3438
ALISON RICE | Senior Editor • 571-312-7433
JENNY SULLIVAN | Senior Editor • 202-736-3483
MELISSA GOLDWEITZ | Senior Graphic Designer • 202-729-3561
KYLE GUSTAFSON | Senior Web Editor • 202-729-3568
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS | David Crowe | William Devereaux | Rich Binsacca | Scott Sedam | Ted Cushman | Ivy Zelman

CATHY UNDERWOOD | Director of Production & Production Technologies
MARGARET COULTER | Lead Production Manager
LAUREN DOBOS | Ad Traffic Manager
TREY GOSSAGE | Assistant Production Manager
FRED WEISSKOPF | Prepress Manager
BETTY KERWIN | Prepress Coordinator

CHRISTINA LUSTAN | Circulation Director
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ANN RUSSELL | Reader Services Manager

HOLLY MILLER | Marketing Director
KIM GROVER | Marketing Manager
KELLY GRIFFITH | Senior Director/Creative Services
STACEY CHATTMAN | Director/Conferences & Seminars

WARREN P. NESBITT | Executive Director/Residential New Construction • 202-736-3328
JEFFREY CALORE | Publisher • 202-380-3766
ALEC DANN | General Manager Online/Residential New Construction • 202-729-3576

HANLEY WOOD BUSINESS MEDIA

PETER M. GOLDSTONE | President • 202-736-3304
RON KRAFT | Director/Finance
NICK CAVNAR | Vice President/Circulation and Database Development
NICK ELSENER | Vice President/Production
ANDREAS SCHMIDT | Executive Director/e-Media

PUBLISHED BY HANLEY WOOD, LLC

FRANK ANTON | Chief Executive Officer
MATTHEW FLYNN | Chief Financial Officer
JEFFREY CRAIG | Chief Information Officer
PAUL TOURBAF | Senior Vice President/Corporate Sales
JOE CARROLL | Vice President/Corporate Development
BRAD LOUGH | Vice President/Finance
MIKE BENDER | Vice President/General Counsel

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES:
One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-452-0800; Fax: 202-785-1974
SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUE ORDERS:
888-269-8410 or e-mail: builder@omeda.com
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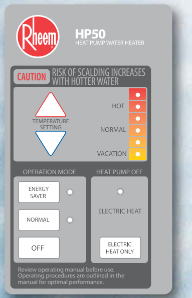

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ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

JEFFREY CALORE | Publisher
Phone: 202-380-3766 Fax: 202-785-1974
E-mail: jcalore@hanleywood.com

ALEC DANN | General Manager Online/Residential New Construction
Phone: 202-729-3576 Fax: 202-785-1974
E-mail: adann@hanleywood.com

JOANNA MOTT | Group Publishing Support Manager
Phone: 773-824-2459 Fax: 202-785-1974
E-mail: jmott@hanleywood.com

CHICAGO
TIM AHLERING, MARK CULLUM, PATTY MORIN
8725 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 600
Chicago, IL 60631
Phone: 773-824-2400 Fax: 773-824-2401

NEW YORK
PAUL PETTERSEN
65 Walnut Ave.
Rockville Centre, NY 11570
Phone: 516-536-9154 Fax: 202-785-1974

ATLANTA
CLARE STEFAN
2090 Dunwoody Club Dr., Suite 106-263
Atlanta, GA 30350
Phone: 770-399-9062 Fax: 770-399-9073

DALLAS
PATTY MORIN
8725 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 600
Chicago, IL 60631
Phone: 773-824-2427 Fax: 773-824-2540

CALIFORNIA
CAROL WEINMAN
395 Del Monte Center, Suite 317
Monterey, CA 93945
Phone: 831-373-6125 Fax: 831-373-6069

CANADA
D. JOHN MAGNER
York Media Services
500 Queens Quay West, Suite 101W
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3K8
Phone: 416-598-0101 Fax: 416-598-9191

ONLINE
EDWIN KRAFT
e-Media Sales Manager
5908 Northern Ct.
Elkridge, MD 21075
Phone: 443-445-3488 Fax: 202-785-1974
E-mail: ekraft@hanleywood.com

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY. STABILIZATION. POSITIVE INDICATORS. Rebound. Turning point. The bottom. It would have been hard to imagine just a few short months ago, but these are the words that have taken over recent headlines. And the stories themselves? Job loss numbers, the last remaining metric to sound a positive note, were the smallest they've been since August of 2008, and unemployment actually dropped a tick from June. Stocks are up nearly 50 percent since a low in March, and Standard & Poor's index hovers steadily above 1,000. Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway is back in the black. Even Freddie Mac turned a profit.

News directly related to the housing market is encouraging, too. Sales of new homes are rising and inventory is decreasing. Sales data for existing homes revealed the biggest monthly increase in more than a decade. Starts are up, and traffic is too. Prices are still low but so are interest rates. And according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, American job seekers are once again relocating for employment. In the second quarter of 2009, more than 18 percent of those finding new jobs moved to take their new positions. Such moves could presage a significant resurgence in home sales in some regions.

No one's ready to say the recession's over, not by a long shot. And there undoubtedly are more hard times to come. But it's nice to have some good news after such a long spell of bad. Sadly, the snippets of good news we're hearing now have come too late for many in our industry. The usual wisdom holds that builders are an optimistic lot, more than most people and often against all odds. The last few years have hammered the industry so hard, though, that many builders have, understandably, lost their customary positive attitude.

But not all of them. Take Trumark Homes, for example. A newly launched home building operation based in Danville, Calif., it's one of the featured companies in our cover story this month on home building startups that have begun sprouting up all over the country (see "Setting Out," page 58). Trumark recently closed on 11 acres in Orange County, Calif., where it plans to build 68 to 72 detached homes starting next year.

This is pretty interesting news, if, like me, you thought it might be a while before the O.C. looked like a good place to start a new project. But the company, a home building arm of a larger residential and commercial development firm, may be in just the right place at the right time. The Southern California Multiple Listing Service reported that revenue from homes sold in Orange County in July totaled $1.4 billion, more than in any month since July 2007. But Trumark's business plan was written long before this upward trend; it carefully mapped out a strategy to target "infill opportunities in constrained markets." The timing may be just a bonus.

JAMES KEGLEY

With demand so low, new home building companies cannot adopt a business as usual attitude. Times have changed, and so have buyers. And, indeed, the other startups we found are seeking to carve out niches for themselves, with business models that offer homes customers can buy now, in these straitened times, but may also provide significant opportunities for growth.

West Palm Beach, Fla.'s Len Tylka may have found such a niche for his new company, HardShell Homes. Tylka and his partners plan to build small, factory-built, wind-resistant homes to NAHB green standards, for workforce buyers. Small, green, wind-resistant, and affordable? It would be hard to lose, even now, with that combination. Add to that equation the prospect of creating an exciting new product for Florida's manufactured home customers. Sounds like a great idea with a lot of potential.

What's your great idea? You don't have to start a new company in order to embrace new concepts, new solutions, or new goals. But you do have to look objectively at your business to see what changes you need to make if you want to ensure its relevance in this market and in the future.

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Public Builders Show Improvement in Second-Quarter Earnings

Most public builders reported improved revenue and sales during the second quarter of the year. While many merely narrowed their losses, some actually made money. Here's a recap of the major reports:

William Lyon Homes, Newport Beach, Calif., reported net income of $39.4 million for the second quarter ended June 30, 2009, compared to a net loss of $38.9 million for the comparable period a year ago.

Toll Brothers, Horsham, Pa., reported that net new orders rose 3 percent to 837 units from the comparable quarter last year. Orders were up 44 percent from the company's fiscal second quarter. The news dramatically lifted the value of the company's stock, which later fell back toward earth.

Beazer Homes USA, Atlanta, reported a net loss of only $27.9 million per share for its fiscal third quarter, easily beating the Wall Street consensus estimate. The number was a big improvement over the $107 million Beazer lost in the comparable quarter last year.

D.R. Horton, Ft. Worth, Texas, reported a loss for its fiscal third quarter ended June 30 of $142.3 million. That's less than half the size of the company's loss in the comparable quarter last year. The loss included $110.8 million in impairments and write-downs of deposits and pre-acquisition costs related to land options Horton does not intend to pursue.

A tax benefit allowed **Centex Corp.**, Dallas, to report $85 million in earnings during its fiscal first quarter that ended June 30th. Later in the month, Centex shareholders approved the company's merger with Pulte.

Meritage Homes, Scottsdale, Ariz., reported a loss of $74 million in its second quarter, but CEO Steve Hilton says the company expects to become profitable again next year.

NAHB Pushes for Tax Credit Extension

Worried that new-home sales may slip backward this year, the NAHB began lobbying Congress last month to extend the $8,000 tax credit for first-time buyers and also allow all buyers of a principal residence to take advantage of it. The NAHB asked that the credit, set to sunset on Nov. 30th, be extended for another year.

NAHB Chairman Joe Robson put the request in terms members of Congress could understand. "It would spur 383,000 additional home sales, including 80,000 home starts, creating nearly 350,000 jobs over the coming year," he said.

Earlier this summer, the Business Roundtable, a group of CEOs from various industries, threw its support behind a tax-credit extension and asked that it be extended to all home buyers of primary residences. The group wrote that the country's economic recovery hinges on a comeback in housing.

A key ally in Congress, Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), wants to up the credit to $15,000, allow all home buyers to take it, remove the income caps, and extend it through at least the middle of next year. Congress is likely to consider these proposals when it returns to Washington in September.

Housing Starts Take a Tumble

After rising for three months, housing starts declined in July to a seasonally adjusted rate of 581,000, evidence that a housing recovery this year is by no means assured. A big drop in multifamily starts overcame an increase in single-family starts and left the metric down 1.7 percent from June and 37.7 percent below the same period a year earlier. *(see page 16)*

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Housing analyst Carl Reichardt of Wachovia says that the industry has benefited from the housing tax credit. As the credit nears its expiration date, "we believe that starts activity may begin to drag." Michael Rehaut of JPMorgan maintained his negative stance on the sector, writing that existing-home levels remain too high.

Single-family starts actually rose 1.7 percent in July over June. Moreover, in a sign that builders think the market is turning, single-family permits rose 5.8 percent over June. They are still down 20 percent from the previous year.

The rise in housing activity may partly explain the increased optimism among home builders as reflected in the August NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index. The measure rose one point to 18 from the month before. The increase was driven mostly by the component that gauges builders' expectations for sales over the next half year. That reading rose by four points.

Market Intelligence Highlights Recovering Markets

PROVIDING FURTHER EVIDENCE OF AN uneven recovery in the housing industry, Hanley Wood Market Intelligence (HWMI) reported last week that June subdivision sales improved in some Eastern and California markets while others continued to struggle.

HWMI, which tracks sales in communities of 10 units or more in select markets, reported that net sales in Washington, D.C., improved 11 percent in June compared to a year ago. Among the other bright spots, HWMI found that net sales improved by 4 percent in Bakersfield, Calif., 8 percent in Northern New Jersey, and 10 percent in Southern New Jersey.

"In Los Angeles we saw a big 68 percent jump in net sales, but it was due to several condo projects opening, resuming sales, or auctioning units," says Jonathan Dienhart, director of published research for HWMI. "Single-family sales are still down 63 percent there, and townhomes are off 39 percent."

Several of the recovering markets owed their success in part to lower prices. Washington, D.C., which appears to be one of the first housing markets to recover, enjoyed its second consecutive month of year-over-year sales increases. Median new-home prices were down 11 percent in June compared to a year earlier.

Prices held steady in neighboring Baltimore, a more affordable market, while June new-home sales there lagged last year's levels by 4 percent.

The 4 percent sales increase in Bakersfield came at a price—a 17 percent decline in median new-home prices.

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While new-home sales improved in the northern and southern ends of New Jersey, they were down 19 percent year over year in the central part of the state. Even so, new-home prices held fairly steady in land-constrained Central New Jersey, dropping only 2 percent from the year before.

The most recent sales tallies indicate that some Western markets are bottoming out. In Seattle, for instance, sales were down only 17 percent compared to a year earlier, much better than readings of 30 percent or more earlier in the year. It's a similar story in San Francisco (sales down 15 percent, prices off 8 percent), San Diego (sales down 15 percent, prices up 6 percent), and Phoenix (sales down 13 percent, prices up 19 percent).

Other markets covered by HWMI are still struggling. In the Central Valley of California and in Sacramento, for instance, sales in June were roughly half of what they were a year earlier. Chicago, which has been doing much worse this year compared to last year, recorded a 62 percent decline in sales in June.

Haven't been on BUILDER Online in a while? Here are a few snippets of stories we don't want you to miss. To read the full articles, go to www.builderonline.com and type in the URL at the end of each story.

Builders Rediscover Columbus

LAST WEEK, HALLMARK HOMES, A 52-year-old family-owned builder based in Woodbridge, N.J., opened its sales office for Oak Park, a 60-acre subdivision in Dublin, Ohio, where Hallmark intends to build 108 attached and detached homes as part of an ambitious self-contained community.

This project is Hallmark's first in Ohio and represents another glimmer of resurgence for the Columbus area, which appears to be attracting new builders again after slogging through one of the country's worst housing droughts.

▶ http://www.builderonline.com/business/builders-rediscover-columbus.aspx

Cabinets That Open With a Wave of a Hand

EVERY NOW AND THEN, A NEW PRODUCT WINS points for its sheer coolness, ingenuity, and, let's face it, audacity. The automated kitchen cabinetry system by Anvil Motion of Brigham City, Utah, fits squarely into this category.

"One day we had a wild idea," says Randy O. Deem, president of the company. "What if we can get the doors to disappear? Normally, [doors] are in the way when [cabinets] are open, so we thought about how we could hide them."

▶ http://www.builderonline.com/cabinets/kitchen-cabinets-that-open-with-a-wave-of-a-homeowners-hand.aspx

Pedestrian-Friendly Developments Pay Dividends

JUST CONSIDER THIS EXAMPLE AS YOU TAKE your next stroll: In two suburbs outside Charlotte, N.C., two homes are built the same year, with the same *(see page 18)*

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square footage, and the same bedroom and bathroom count. These two houses also are located in places with the same neighborhood income level and the same distance to Charlotte's central business district.

But these two homes are not equal on the market. In one neighborhood, the house sells for $280,000 while its counterpart goes for $314,000. The difference, according to CEOs for Cities' research, is the homes' relative walkability.

▶ http://www.builderonline.com/green-communities/pedestrian-friendly-developments-pay-dividends.aspx

Recession to End This Year

First, the good news. Mark Zandi, chief economist for Moody's Economy.com, believes the Great Recession will end this year.

"This recession has been the longest, most severe, and the broadest-based than any recession since the Great Depression, hence the moniker 'The Great Recession,'" said Zandi in a teleconference on "The State of the Coming Recovery." But such economic turmoil should end sometime in 2009, he said, thanks to adjustments in consumer spending, the stabilization of the U.S. banking system, and the expected benefits of the federal stimulus package.

▶ http://www.builderonline.com/economic-conditions/zandi-recession-will-end-this-year.aspx

Bob the Builder in Debt?

In a fiction mirrors reality moment, Bob the Builder is broke. Neil Morrissey, the British actor whose voice is that of Bob the Builder in the original children's television show, has told "News of the World" that he is 2.5 million pounds in debt after a property scheme he invested in collapsed.

Morrissey, who also stars in the popular British television show "Men Behaving Badly" and performs on stage in London's West End, said he has struck an agreement to funnel all his earnings for more than three years, minus living expenses, toward paying off his debts to creditors.

▶ http://www.builderonline.com/debt/bob-the-builder-in-debt.aspx

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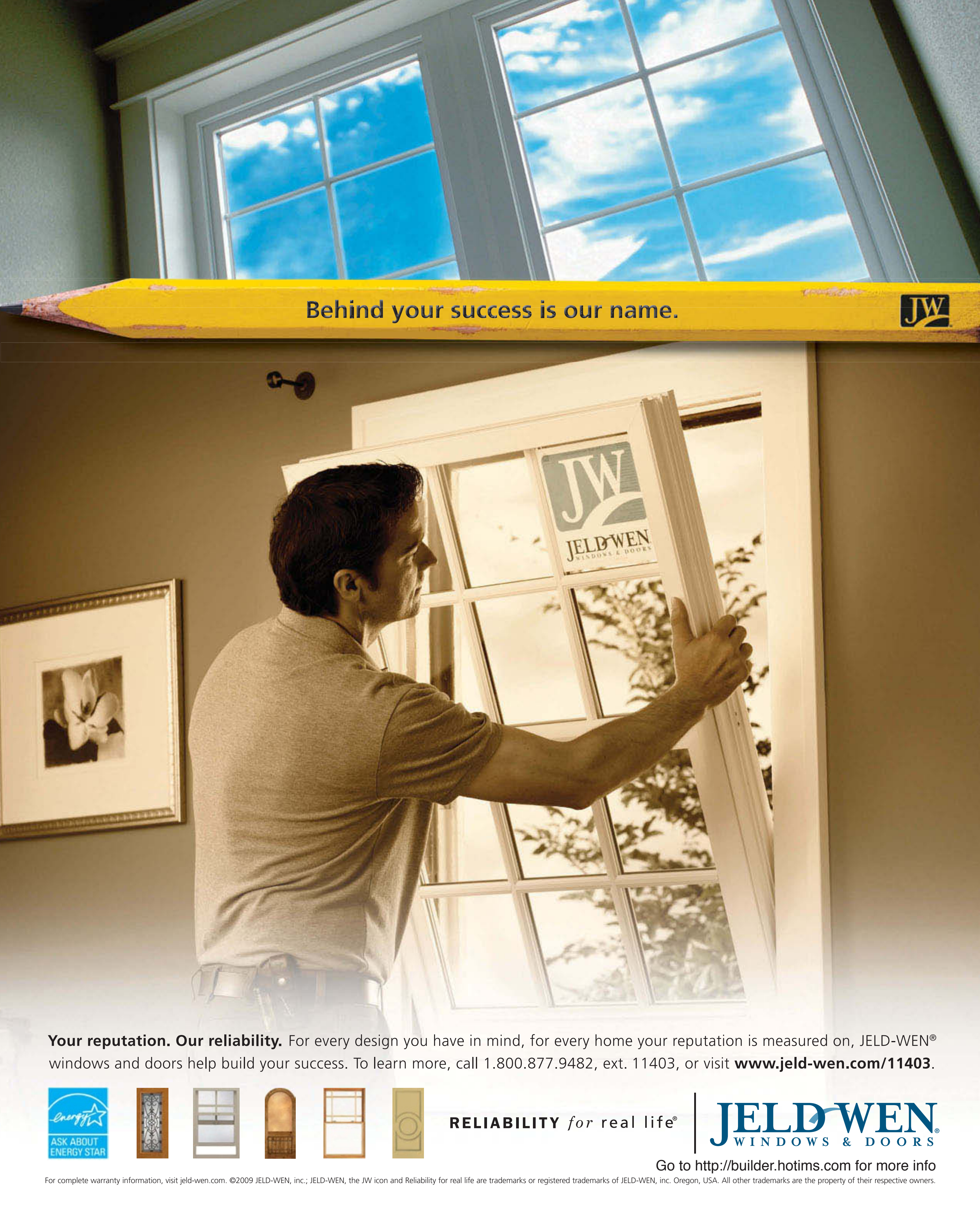
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dleopold@hanleywood.com

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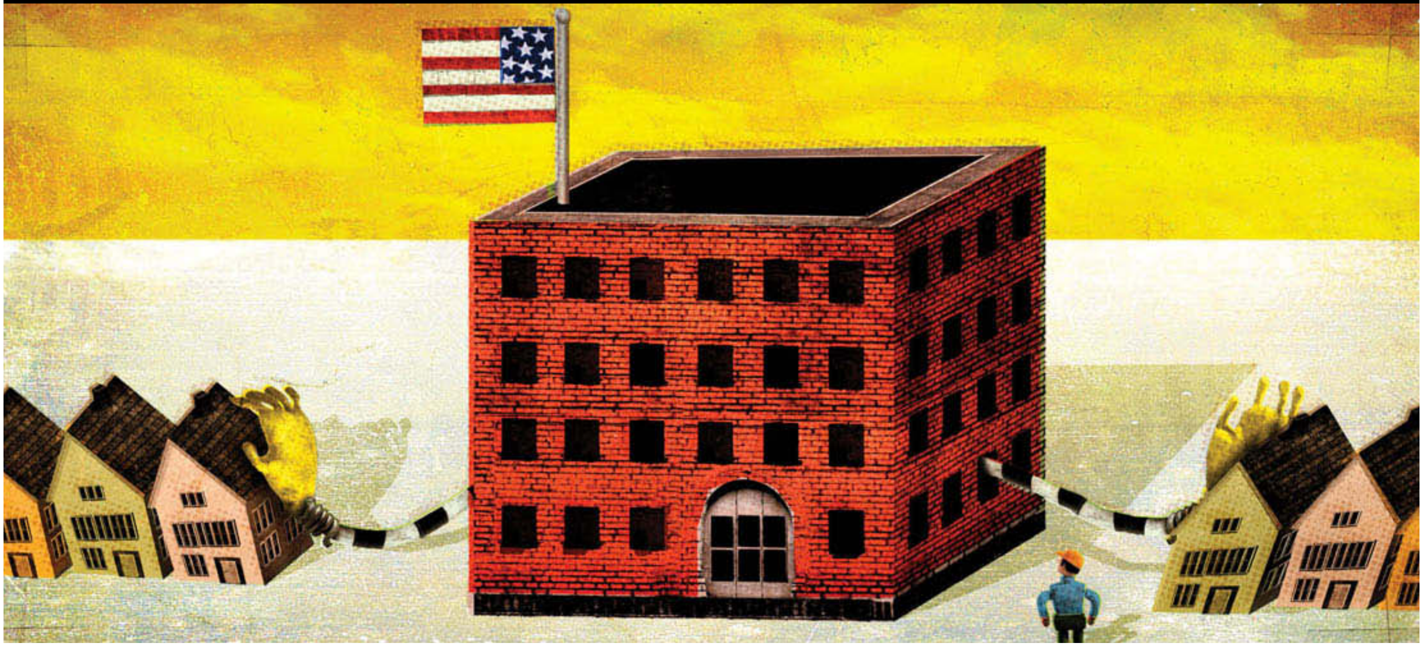
INSIDE STORY

Inside:

24 Hit the Wall
Latest data shows that in 2007 independent contractors still flooded into construction until the downturn struck builders hard.

PLUS MORE > >

COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EVENTS ■ EDITED BY JOHN CAULFIELD



RICHARD BORGE

IMPACT FEES

Summer Recess

A Maryland county halts development in some areas because of school overcrowding.

On July 1, the planning board of Montgomery County, Md., imposed a moratorium that could stall residential development for several months in three metropolitan "clusters" whose school enrollments are projected to exceed allowable levels in five years.

This moratorium is now part of a broader nationwide debate over school construction and who's going to pay for it when cities and states are increasingly cash-strapped and can no longer depend automatically on impact taxes and fees. Through mid-year, Montgomery County had collected only about one-third of the $34 million it anticipated in fiscal 2009 from impact taxes, primarily because there's so little building going, says Raquel Montenegro, associate director of legislative affairs for the Maryland National Capital BIA in Silver Spring.

"At the end of the day, builders aren't building. And banks aren't going to lend builders money to pay impact fees," says Annie Hansen, executive officer with the HBA of the Lowcountry in Beaufort, S.C. That state recently decided not to enact a bill that would have allowed Beaufort and Jasper counties to impose school impact fees on developers.

Municipalities in South Carolina are looking for supplemental ways to pay for schools because the state's redistribution of property taxes for education, which is based on property value, can be quite variable. "So where Greenville is set to receive $160 million this year, Beaufort and Hilton Head get nothing," says Hansen.

In July, Montana's Ravalli County was evaluating a request by a *(see page 24)*

local school board to impose impact fees for school construction totaling $4,000 per house over five years. Dustin Stewart, executive director of the Montana BIA in Helena, says threats of school impact fees are getting louder, and his chapter has produced a list of "talking points" for builders to use in their efforts to thwart such levies. The white paper notes, for example, that most new homes sold in Montana have "no impact" on schools because their owners don't have children; and that younger first-time home buyers in the state are more likely to purchase an existing, rather than new, home.

At the least, "schools are always a constraining factor" in any new development plans, observes Dr. David Lever, head of school construction for the Maryland Board of Public Works. That's particularly true in a state where school construction (which averages around $15 million) is paid for through wealth-based state and local financing. So, for example, Maryland can contribute up to 94 percent of the cost of a school in Baltimore, but only up to 50 percent in affluent Montgomery County.

PAY TO PLAY

UNIT TYPE	COST: ELEMENTARY	COST: MIDDLE	COST: HIGH
Single-family attached	$6,245	$3,659	$2,734
Single-family detached	$4,118	$3,100	$3,734
Multifamily garden apartment	$2,986	$1,423	$2,081
High-rise; low-rise with structured parking	$820	$991	$941

SOURCE: MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD., PLANNING BOARD

NEW ANTE: The county imposes school impact fees on builders and developers in cities where overcrowding in school enrollment is expected to exceed a 105 percent cap in five years.

County officials still "want growth," says Montenegro; the roadblock is how the county determines growth's impact on its schools. A test it conducts annually recently estimated that public schools in nine cities would exceed 105 percent capacity in 2014. Depending on whether the overcrowding would be in their elementary, middle, or high schools, builders and developers with projects in those cities—that already pay impact fees—will be required to pay "school facilities" fees (see "Pay to Play").

That test also determined that three "clusters"—Bethesda/Chevy Chase, Seneca Valley, and Clarksburg—would be at more than 120 percent of capacity, which triggered the moratorium on residential development. The "Catch 22," says Montenegro, is that the county can't budget for new school construction and renovation until it has a firm enrollment count for this school year, which probably won't be available until November.

Montenegro thinks the moratorium could have been avoided had the release of school test results been delayed until November, so new schools scheduled for completion by 2015 could have been included. She also thinks the county should give greater consideration to the root causes of overcrowding: rising public school enrollment because private schools are either closing or too expensive; increasing birth rates of existing households; and a switch to full-day kindergartens, from half-day. "What gets lost in this discussion," she says, "is the pressure on the current infrastructure by existing households."—*J.C.*

CONTRACTOR WORKFORCE

Mad Rush

New businesses flocked into housing in 2007, just before it cried uncle.

Independent contractors were still streaming into the construction field in 2007, according to the latest data on nonemployer businesses (i.e., those without paid employees) that the U.S. Census Bureau released in late June. But flattening revenue for those and other construction businesses was an early warning signal that the country's decade-long building boom had hit a speed bump on its way to crashing into a wall.

Overall, the country that year saw nonemployment businesses in all industries grow by 4.5 percent to 21.7 million, of which 19.1 million were sole proprietorships. The construction sector accounted for 2.66 million of the total businesses, representing a 4.2 percent increase in that sector over 2006. These businesses generated $159 billion in receipts, about the same as in 2006.

Even though the housing industry was already showing signs of distress, residential construction nonemployer businesses grew by 4.3 percent, to 592,988, in 2007. Of that total, 525,187 businesses were sole proprietorships. About 10 percent (59,043) of residential construction businesses that year were in California and 8 percent in Texas.

Two-fifths of the $992 billion in receipts generated by all nonemployer businesses in 2007 came from three sectors: real estate services, scientific services, and specialty trade contractors, the latter of which saw its businesses grow by 4.8 percent to 1.92 million that produced $96.7 million in revenue. (Census didn't break out whether specialists were residential or commercial contractors.)

Within this group, electrical contractors increased by an 11.6 percent jump to 133,524, and plumbing and HVAC contractors by 9 percent to 137,990. Combined, these two specialty contractor groups generated $14 billion in receipts, or just marginally more than the year before.

When Census releases data for 2008 next summer, the housing industry will be closer to knowing just how many small businesses survived the collapse.—*J.C.*

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TOPSHELF

THE LATEST AND GREATEST BUILDING PRODUCTS ■ EDITED BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

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Anyone who has installed ceramic tile knows how rough it can be on the hands. Grabber Cups are designed to protect the user from cuts and scrapes that come from handling ceramic tile as well as other materials such as sheet metal. Available in four sizes, the pieces have a lifting capacity of 25 pounds. ■ **Cost: 51 cents to $2.37 each. Vi-Cas Manufacturing. 513-791-7741. www.vi-cas.com.**

Save It

Studies show that people conserve more energy when they can see their usage in real time. The Maestro eco-minder dimmer operates on a similar principle. It features an LED display that changes from red to green when homeowners are saving energy by at least 15 percent. The green light moves down to show additional energy savings. It comes in white, almond, and ivory. ■ **Cost: $45.50. Lutron Electronics. 888-588-7661. www.lutron.com.**

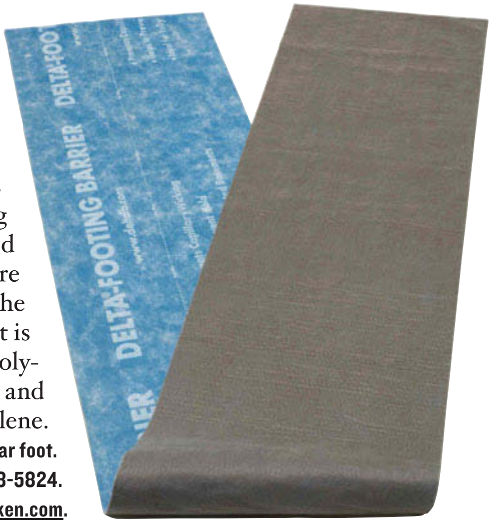
Electric Motor

Designed by Jake Dyson, son of the famed vacuum purveyor, Motorlight is purportedly the world's first variable-angle uplight. The wall-mounted fixture comes with a remote control that allows homeowners to adjust motorized shutters for ambient illumination or for spot lighting. It comes in black gloss, white gloss, and clear glow. ■ **Cost: $450 (plus $60 for the remote). The Conran Shop. 212-755-9079. www.conranusa.com.**

(see page 28)

Water Barrier

Even basement walls that are waterproofed can wick water into the space through the footings. To combat this, the company has introduced Delta Footing Barrier, which is installed on top of footings before walls are poured. The 18-inch-wide product is made from layers of polyethylene fiber, polyester, and bonded polypropylene. ■ **Cost: 90 cents per linear foot. Cosella-Dörken. 888-433-5824. www.cosella-dorken.com.**

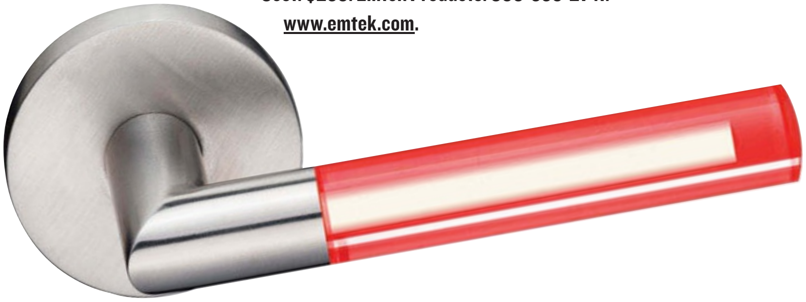


Take the F

If a stream-lined bathroom is your goal, the Rainshower F-Series shower-heads and body sprays are for you. The line has a low-profile design that sits flush with shower walls and can be combined with different elements for a custom configuration. A Speed-Clean nozzle surface makes maintenance simple and easy. ■ **Cost: $199 to $1,749. Grohe America. 630-582-7711. www.groheamerica.com.**

Get a Grip

The Brighthandle line of stainless steel levers incorporates an acrylic handle that illuminates when the privacy function is engaged on the inside, making it ideal for bathrooms or powder rooms. Available in two lever styles and three acrylic designs, it uses a single AA battery. ■ **Cost: $250. Emtek Products. 800-356-2741. www.emtek.com.**



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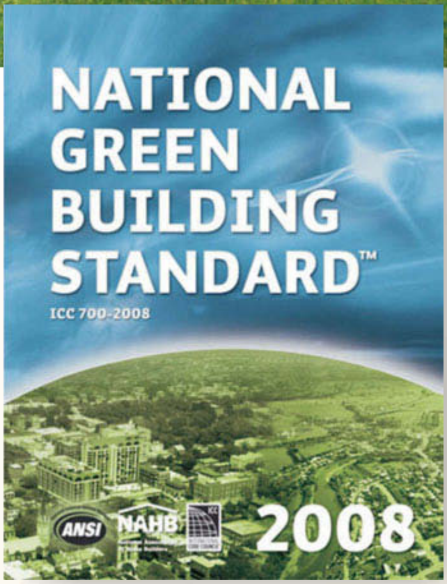

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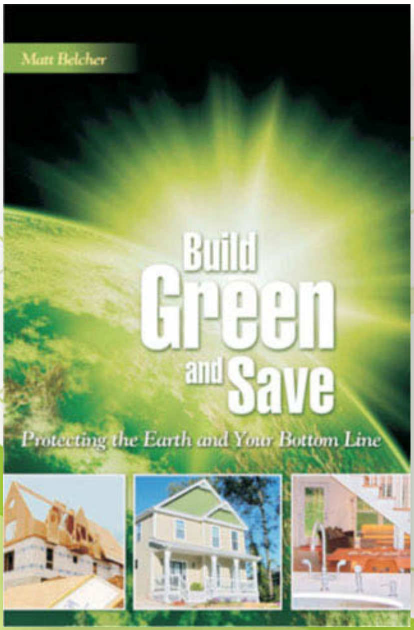

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JANUARY 18

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GREEN HOUSE

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, PRODUCTS & SALES ■ EDITED BY RICH BINSACCA

ZERO-ENERGY GOAL: A handful of homes (so far) are being designed for The Ridge at Chukkar Creek with a net-zero energy goal thanks to an innovative solar-and-hydrogen fuel cell solution.

GREEN TECHNOLOGY

Hydrogen Homes

Innovation and a bit of luck enable the option of a hydrogen fuel cell.

Building at The Ridge at Chukkar Creek near Aiken, S.C., is just getting underway, but already the forested parcel is generating attention for its proposed use of a more affordable hydrogen fuel cell design that will enable net-zero energy use among a handful of new homes.

Running off of a rooftop photovoltaic (PV) array, smartly recessed into the trusses to run flush with a metal roof finish, the hydrogen electrolizer—sized to a residential scale—essentially serves as an on-site utility to provide electrical energy when the solar cells go dormant at night. "Traditionally, the cell will strip hydrogen [for energy] from natural gas, which is usually a carbon-intensive process," says George Watt, a Boulder, Colo.–based architect charged with designing the first few semi-custom homes at The Ridge to employ the technology. Using solar energy instead, the system at The Ridge will emit only water vapor and oxygen from the process as the electrolizer separates the hydrogen for the fuel cell.

Using a device that tracks the path of the sun, Watt and developer Ron Monahan *(see page 36)*

PHOTOS: LEFT: COURTESY THE RIDGE AT CHUKKAR CREEK; RIGHT: COURTESY KLEER LUMBER; RENDERING: COURTESY GEORGE WATT ARCHITECT

Inside:

36 Energy Saver
Appliance giant GE spreads its wings further to include new products aimed at a net-zero energy solution for homes.

PLUS MORE > >

Kleer Choice

It isn't often that the words "plastic" and "green" are linked together as eco-positives, but Kleer Trimboard, recently certified by Scientific Certification Systems (www.scscertified.org) for its recycled cellular PVC content, is among a growing group of plastics that may change that perception. The material, among a full range of exterior finish products from Kleer Lumber (www.kleerlumber.com), is offered in standard dimensions with a smooth or wood-textured finish, works like wood,

can be painted, and is impervious to moisture. Kleer's raw material and manufacturing specs for the product line ensure a tight cell structure and dimensional integrity. ▸

GREEN HOUSE

Water Works

According to the United Nations Environmental Program, buildings of all types combine to consume 20 percent of the world's available water.

"Water Use in Buildings," the latest SmartMarket Report from McGraw-Hill Construction, outlines the state of water within the green building movement and provides direction for creating high-tech, low-water-demand projects. Within five years, says the report, water conservation will be on par with energy and waste reduction in green building design, construction, and product selection.

For more information and to purchase the report, go to http://construction.ecnext.com/coms2/summary_0249-307522_ITM_analytics.

Meanwhile, green architect Michelle Kaufmann released her latest white paper, "Turning the Tides of Crisis: Prioritizing Water Conservation Before It's Too Late," with several ideas to address the issue. The white paper is available for free download at http://blog.michellekaufmann.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/water_crisis.pdf.

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TO READ MORE STORIES ON GREEN BUILDING, GO TO WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM/GREEN.

selected the five most suitable homesites for the PV-fuel cell system, which will eliminate the power bill for heating and cooling for those homeowners.

The scheme also eliminates the need for the homes to net-meter (or exchange energy credits) along the power grid with the local utility. In addition, it does not rely on traditional battery backups for PV-generated electricity, which can be cumbersome and unreliable.

To store and distribute the surplus energy from the PV panels, the project team and GreenWay Energy, a local fuel cell consultant and developer, will employ an underground propane tank, a far more affordable, reliable, unobtrusive, and readily available option for a residential application.

The system will be roughed in to the first five homes and offered as an optional upgrade to the already stringent green building standards at The Ridge. Watt has engineered the builders' existing plans and specs—such as upgraded insulation and fenestration—and applied Energy Star standards to achieve a 50 percent to 60 percent energy-use reduction without the solar-hydrogen cell scheme.

The project team also selected home designs that suited the wooded setting of the community. Though contemporary, the homes sit low within the woods so the developer didn't have to cut down a lot of trees, which helped maintain the natural landscape of the parcel. The designs also fit well with South Carolina's historical vernacular. "Even though we are incorporating technological advances not yet seen in the marketplace of homes, we want the homes to look and feel warm, inviting, and nurturing, as a home should," Watt says.—*R.B.*

NET-ZERO ENERGY HOMES

Whole-House Approach

An appliance giant sets its sights on a net-zero energy solution.

Builders likely know GE as a supplier of major appliances and, if they are really savvy, lighting products. And while the company has certainly gained a strong foothold in those product categories, GE Consumer & Industrial (as it is known officially) plans to leverage that position and its lesser-known electrical distribution division and GE Energy subsidiary into a portfolio of solutions that will enable builders to provide net-zero energy homes by 2015.

Achieving net-zero energy relies on a comprehensive combination of energy-efficient products and systems, off-grid power generation, and a willing local electric utility partner that will allow homeowners to turn surplus energy into credits through the meter and power grid. GE Consumer & Industrial's plan is to be a one-stop shop for builders of net-zero energy homes, an ambitious goal that will require the company to develop and market a broader range of products.

Among those solutions are a full suite of appliances and lighting fixtures equipped with demand response technology that work with similarly enabled utility meters to delay or reduce energy use of those products during peak demand times for grid power. Already, GE boasts 550 appliances and 271 lighting products that qualify under the federal Energy Star program.

Appliances, lighting, and HVAC equipment account for more than 80 percent of a home's energy use. To address the third leg of that stool, GE will unveil a hybrid electric heat pump water heater later this year. The product is designed to use less than half the energy required for a standard 50-gallon water heater and will be equipped with demand response to further reduce its energy use. A new geothermal heat pump will address space heating and cooling needs in what is proving to be an effective and efficient alternative to air-reliant HVAC equipment.

Next year, GE will continue its effort by introducing a home energy manager, deemed the central nervous system of the net-zero energy home, as well as smart thermostats that will help homeowners better manage their energy use. Concurrently, GE Energy will contribute photovoltaics, advanced on-site energy storage, and small-scale wind turbines—among other renewable energy generating solutions—to satisfy that sector of the net-zero energy home.

For more information, go to www.genewscenter.com/Content/detail.asp?ReleaseID=7272&NewsAreaID=2&PrintPreview=True.—*R.B.*

GOT GREEN PROJECTS, PRODUCTS, OR DESIGNS?

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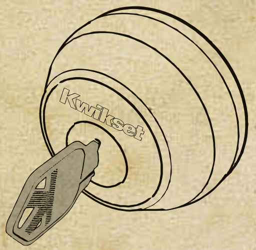

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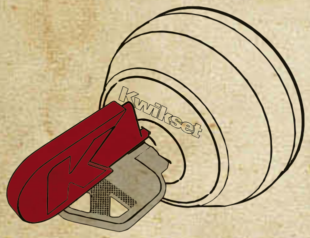

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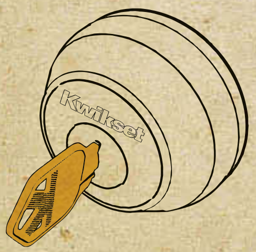

DONE

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It's not every day you come across an ad so long and so ripe with information about SmartKey by Kwikset. It's your lucky day. And since re-keying technology is important and beneficial to you, dear reader, we wanted to give you several compelling reasons to keep reading. To find those compelling reasons, just keep reading. We promise you're going to be really, really compelled.

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Another reason to re-key your locks with SmartKey is that, it saves you time and money. Not just time. Not just money. Time and money. Those are two great things to be saving. That happens because you won't have to take the lock off the door, replace all those little pins and then re-install it on the door. Just re-key the lock in seconds, and poof, you're on your way. Richer and with time to spare. Nice.

One more no-brainer benefit is the added security and key control you get. You manage every single lock on the job and, therefore, reduce the cost and hassle of missing keys. Lose one? Simply re-key the lock. And you're all set. Who couldn't use some extra security and control? That's a trick question. Everyone could. Fact.

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You are now the most compelled person on the planet. You're armed with four pretty rock solid reasons to re-key your locks with SmartKey. But just for fun, let's do a little recap. Re-keying your locks is fast, easy, efficient, increases security, and turns you into the captain of lock and key. Thanks for sticking with it this long. Now how about a handshake. Haha. Just kidding. I don't have hands.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

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The Great Cost Chasm

Reduce your costs by creating fully working house plans right from the start.

I AM DRIVING THROUGH A PROJECT IN TEXAS WITH TONY, A construction manager. I point to a group standing on the curb holding a plan over their heads, up to the bright sun, glasses off, talking and pointing. I ask Tony, "What's wrong with this picture?" After a long pause, he explains they are building a left-hand house from a right-hand drawing.

When I ask why the builder would possibly ask anyone to do that, Tony gives the stock reply, "It costs a lot to reverse those plans, and we had to let our CAD guy go." So I ask, "How much?" But it's a gotcha question, because I have asked it a hundred times. It costs between $75 and $200 if you have your own "CAD-guy," depending on your system capability and how complicated your plans are. An outside architect will charge somewhat more. We agree on "150 bucks." I follow with, "How many mistakes might result from 40 or 50 suppliers and trades, all building a mirror image, with no reversed plans?" We settle on a very conservative, best-case guess of 10 mistakes. Final question: "How many mistakes avoided does it takes to break even on the cost to reverse that plan?" Tony gives me a pained look, shakes his head, and says, "About a half of one I'd think." Then he adds, "Do you think you could explain this to my boss?"

A few months later I presented at the NAHB International Builders' Show to an audience of more than 300 who had come to learn about implementing Lean Methods in home building. I retold the "Tony story" and several similar ones, bolstered with pictures illustrating an issue costing the industry literally billions annually. My True-North colleagues and I continually witness a disconnect between builders and their architects. There is a huge gap, a chasm, between architectural plans and genuine, fully fleshed out, iron-clad , site-specific working drawings. It causes continual errors, schedule delays, and rework resulting in incredible cost, adding no value, yet is almost never identified and attributed to the true source. One audience participant raised her hand and asked a pointed question. "Okay Scott, so how do you find an architect who gets it?" "Simple," I replied, "you wander from office to office, desperately seeking one pair of muddy shoes." Careful, though, the architects are only part of the problem.

Builders are desperate to reduce costs and have pushed themselves to the limit, yet we continually observe them walking right past some of the best savings opportunities. There are millions sitting right under their noses yet builders don't see it because they don't know how to measure and track the waste. Most simply assume these costs are just part of doing business. Those few that have cracked the code on the plans issue reap astounding gains in profit, quality, homeowner satisfaction, and supplier/trade loyalty. Last year I experienced it first hand—Plan Nirvana. Yes, there is such a place. I saw a company that had working drawings so detailed, so thorough, so complete, so site-specific, that any competent trade could build these homes right the first time, every time, to code, at or below target cost. Nothing whatsoever was left to debate or question. I had seen "good." This was "great," and I was taken aback seeing that it actually could be done.

This builder had succeeded in bridging the great cost chasm between beautiful architectural plans and truly functional working drawings. I asked them a ton of questions that day and answering them all would give away too much, but just one example will suffice. I asked if the cabinet supplier ever had to come out and measure the specific jobsite. They were almost offended as they replied, "Never!" Now, find an example of how costs would be reduced with this level of functionally perfect working drawings for each of the 40 or 50 suppliers and trades who build your homes. Cost it out. Do it right, and you've just found a good chunk of the precious margin you lost over the past few years.

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TrueNorth Development
Northville, Mich.
e-mail: scott@truen.com

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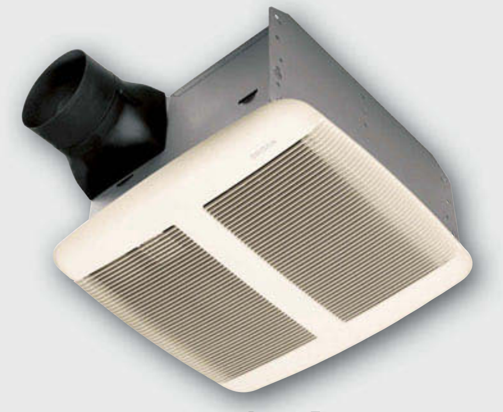

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PRODUCTS

PRODUCTS AND TOOLS EVERY BUILDER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ■ EDITED BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

ARCTICB LAST: The Arctic Series is not the manufacturer's typical Corian product. Calling it "the next evolution of surface translucency," the company has created five new offerings that are a combination of white and a tinted backdrop color that emits a ghostly glow when lit from underneath. Available in a $^1/_2$-inch thickness, the product can be thermoformed, bent, and textured. ■ **DuPont. 800-426-7426.** www.countertops.dupont.com.

SURFACET ENSION: ECO by Cosentino is a new surfacing made from 75 percent recycled material, including salvaged mirrors and window glass, recycled consumer glass, porcelain, and industrial furnace ash. The recycled content is mixed with 25 percent stone scrap and bonded with a resin made in part from corn oil and resin. It's available in slabs measuring 63 inches by 128 inches and 12-, 18-, and 24-inch-square tiles. ■ **Cosentino North America. 800-291-1311.** www.ecobycosentino.com.

Counter Offers

Need a hip, attractive, durable counter? Try to top these.

If you're looking for a cool countertop surfacing material, there is good news and bad news. First the good: In recent years, the category has seen a steady increase in new and exciting materials as well as an equal amount of re-engineered oldies but goodies. The bad news, however, is that the breadth of options can leave even the most informed scratching their collective heads.

It wasn't so 40 years ago, when options were limited to laminate, butcher block, various types of stone, and maybe ceramic tile. Laminate had a stranglehold on the category and was seemingly the only game in town, but then Wilmington, Del.–based DuPont came along with Corian solid surfacing and changed the game. With its low-maintenance qualities, its ability to assume different shapes, and the fact that it can be fabricated with nearly invisible seams, Corian became a consumer darling.

Today, of course, Corian and the aforementioned materials are but a drop in the bucket for a product category in which there are layers of subcategories. Take concrete, for example. What was once seen as a frivolous choice when it first appeared on the scene has become a viable option. You can now specify regular concrete countertops or you can get really specific and ask for lightweight concrete (Syndecrete, among others), or a combination of concrete with recycled glass (Ice Stone, among *(see page 44)*

SQUAKB OX: A relatively new product, Squak Mountain Stone is made from low-carbon cement, and post-consumer and post-industrial recycled paper and recycled glass. The resulting product has the industrial look of concrete or the rustic appearance of limestone or slate. Slabs come in five colors and measure 56 inches wide, 96 inches long, and 1 $^3/_8$ inches thick. ■ **Tiger Mountain Innovations. 206-234-4791.** www.squakmountainstone.com.

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many), with recycled paper *and* recycled glass (Squak Mountain Stone), or recycled porcelain (EnviroMODE), and on and on.

And new materials keep coming. One area of growth is in so-called sustainable countertops—those made with post-consumer recycled content such as paper, glass, or stainless steel, or offerings made from salvage material or from rapidly renewable sources such as bamboo.

Bainbridge Island, Wash.–based Teragren, which offers a stable of bamboo products, has expanded to include three new countertops—strand bamboo, end-grain strand bamboo, and traditional bamboo.

"Teragren is committed to developing innovative new bamboo products that meet the ever-growing demand for sustainable materials," Ann Knight, executive vice president and global brand director, says in a statement announcing the line. "As consumers continue looking for eco-friendly products to complement the kitchen, bath—and the entire home—we're thrilled to offer these new, beautiful, and sustainable bamboo countertops that are perfect for residential and commercial settings."

Quartz, which was first used in Europe 20 years ago and exploded on the U.S. scene in the last 15, continues to grow in popularity. Made from at least 93 percent natural quartz, resins, and colorants, the product is touted as granite's more versatile and low-maintenance cousin. Manufacturers are making the product with recycled content, too.

Cosentino North America in Stafford, Texas, recently launched ECO by Cosentino, a line of surfacing made from 75 percent recycled material. It caters to environmentally conscious and design-oriented architects, builders, and consumers, the company says. Roberto Contreras Jr., president of Cosentino North America, says the product "marks the introduction of an entirely new category to the industry and sets a new standard that not only complies with environmental regulations but goes beyond and invests in innovative environmental and conservation practices and technologies."

DuPont, as well, is no longer content to offer the standard fare. The company has grown its color palette and continues to expand its product line. At this year's Kitchen/Bath Industry Show, the manufacturer added the Arctic Series to its line of translucent solid surfacing. Maureen McGeehan, marketing manager for DuPont Surfaces, says the Arctic Series is perhaps the company's coolest to date. "The sleek contemporary colors are embellished with a wintry mix of white, which combined with its tinted backdrop color will diffuse light and recharge any environment," she adds.

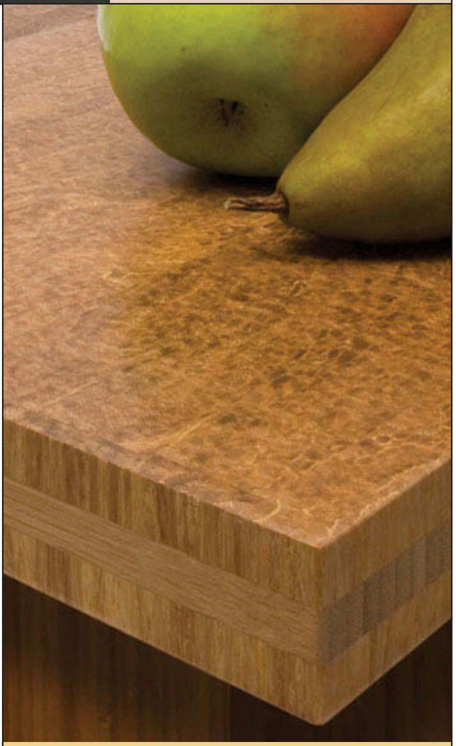
What's cool about Arctic is that it permits more light to pass through the material than other Corian colors, which allows designers to create spaces with a ghostly vibe when the countertop is lit from below.

So, with all the options, how is a builder or designer to choose? "I like to think of each situation as unique [so] we choose surfacing materials that are appropriate to the particular project," says architect Kevin Alter, principal of Alterstudio in Austin, Texas. Alter prefers products "that will seam well so we can make a slab seem more substantial ... or especially long," he says.

Among Alter's favorites are cast stone, quartz, homogeneous stones such as black granite or soapstone, stainless steel, and white marble—even though many designers often discourage homeowners from using the product in the kitchen.

Says Alter, "It's so very elegant and timeless, and while I know folks worry about it staining, I think it is worth the risk—it has been traditional counter material for hundreds of years, and often looks better a bit worn in." **B**

CERAMICG LAZE: The manufacturer takes pre-consumer toilets, tubs, and sinks from Kohler and turns them into a new line of countertop product called Enviro-MODE. Using the craft of terrazzo, the company combines epoxy resin or cementitious binder with the crushed porcelain chips to create a top that is free of volatile organic compounds. It is also heat and scratch resistant. ■ **EnviroGLAS.** **888-523-7894. www.enviroglasproducts.com.**



STRANDS TREET: The manufacturer has added three new renewable bamboo countertops to its collection of products: strand, end-grain strand, and traditional. Made with non-urea adhesive, the strand countertop products are 154 percent harder than red oak and each top is bacteria-resistant and formaldehyde-free. Various sizes are available from 36 inches wide, 72 inches long, and 1 1/2 inches thick. ■ **Teragren.** **800-929-6333. www.teragren.com.**

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HUBER ENGINEERED WOODS

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DIGITALHOME

SMART TECHNOLOGY FOR NEW HOMES ■ EDITED BY DAN DALEY

HIGH-DEF HOME

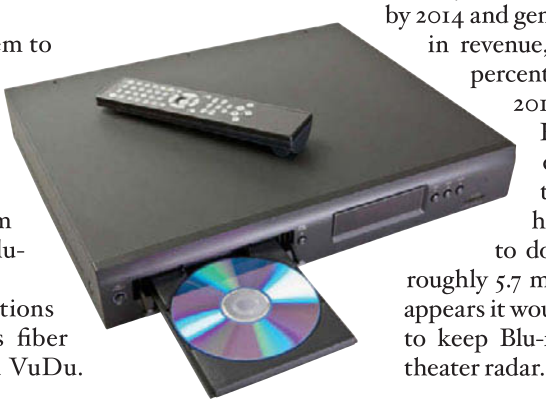
On the Horizon

Where will Blu-ray fit in with the next-gen home theater?

Sony's next-generation Blu-ray Disc (BD) format was supposed to prove its market viability during the 2008 holiday selling season. Given that no one was buying much of anything, BD's future remains up in the air.

However, systems integrators seem to be ready to recommend BD as the best choice to bring high-definition (HD) video into the home. A survey by leading trade publication *CEPro* found that among the more than 100 responses received from electronic systems consultants, Blu-ray players were the first choice.

Dissenters called for HD solutions ranging from satellite to Verizon's fiber cable–based FiOS to Apple TV and VuDu.



A JP Morgan study last year found that only 62 percent of respondents were even aware of Blu-ray.

However, the familiarity of a disc-based format won the majority of the *CEPro* respondents over. Market research firm Futuresource estimated that approximately 36 million Blu-ray discs were sold worldwide last year, with 24 million sold in the U.S. in 2008. Sales in this country are expected to top 80 million this year, the company says. And a separate study from SNL Kagan found that despite BD's sluggish start, the next-generation HD packaged–media format would attain nearly 60 percent market share by 2014 and generate $13.1 billion in revenue, growing to 73.8 percent/$15.6 billion by 2017. The Consumer Electronics Association estimates that Blu-ray decks have the potential to double this year to roughly 5.7 million units. So it appears it would be worthwhile to keep Blu-ray on the home theater radar.—*D.D.*

BETTER INTEGRATION

Come Together

ZigBee Alliance will merge IT standards with its wireless network.

The confluence of home systems and IT took another step forward this past spring with the announcement by the ZigBee Alliance that its specification portfolio of low-power wireless networking standards would henceforth also include global IT standards from the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). The move was prompted, the ZigBee announcement indicated, by the rapid growth of the smart grid/smart meter sector.

By incorporating IETF standards, ZigBee-enabled smart energy products will enhance their application capabilities with native IP support, which will enable more seamless integration of Internet connectivity into each product, benefiting from the IETF standards for large-scale network addressability, security, and IT integration.

The closer integration of home networks and established, enterprise-level IT standards is sitting well with utilities. "This creates a win-win for everyone by combining the strengths of the ZigBee Smart Energy standard with the ubiquity of Internet standards and confirms that smart meter deployments currently underway will have a seamless path for continuous upgrades including Internet connectivity," says Paul De Martini, vice president at Southern California Edison, the state's largest electric utility, with 4.8 million customer accounts. California Edison has been installing ZigBee-enabled smart meters in its service areas for retrofitting existing homes and for new construction. According to a ZigBee spokesperson, an estimated 30 million ZigBee-equipped smart meters are currently being used in North America. For more information, visit www.ZigBee.org.—*D.D.*

Streamline

Crestron's CEN-NVS100 MJPG encoder streams video to any compatible touchpanel on a home network, converting high-resolution video to streaming media, allowing more precise monitoring of door entry cameras, nursery cameras, or any other video feed. It accepts full motion video up to D1 resolution and encodes the signals as either MJPG or MPEG4. Simultaneous dual video streams are supported, and options include text and time stamp overlay. The system works with touchpanels that feature the Crestron MJPEG Viewer application. $700. www.crestron.com.

Smart Change

Boulder, Colo.–based Tendril's Translate Meter Bridge converts existing electrical meters into smart meters that can track residential energy use as frequently as once every few minutes. Tendril plans to introduce the meter to thousands of homes this year. The device can be integrated into a type of meter that utilities have installed in about half of U.S. homes that relay short-range wireless data to passing meter readers. www.tendrilinc.com.

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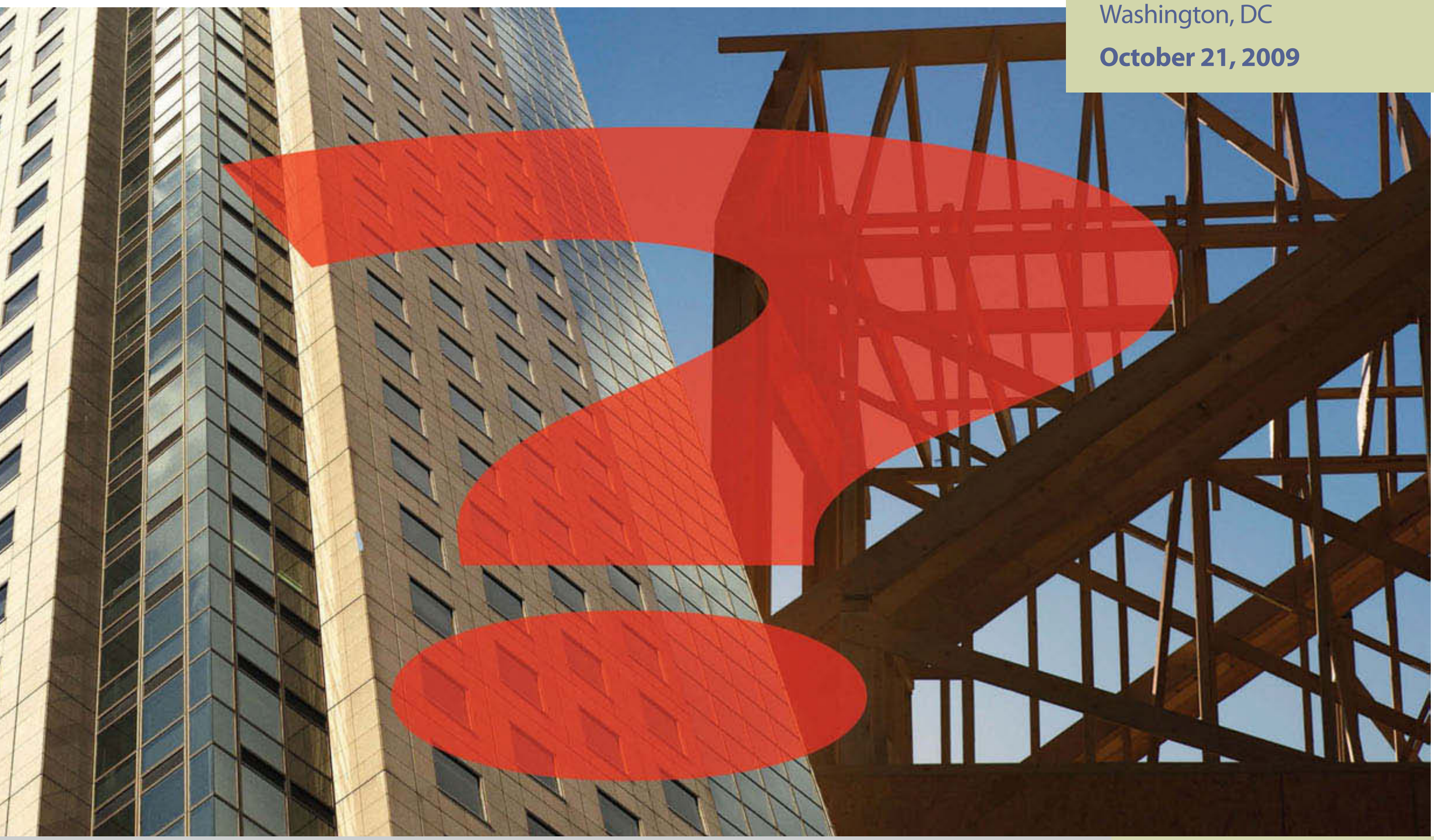

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- Participate via the webcast when it is convenient to your schedule (you can download and play the webcast following the actual day's event if you're not available) or gather others in your business or local builders' association to watch together.

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NAHB BRIEFS

Enhance Credit

The NAHB is asking its members to urge Congress to extend the $8,000 first-time home buyer tax credit for an additional year and make it available to all eligible buyers of a principal residence.

"If Congress acts to extend the tax credit program, it would spur 383,000 additional home sales, including 80,000 housing starts, creating nearly 350,000 jobs over the coming year," says Joe Robson, NAHB chairman. "That's good for the economy and good for America."

In addition to extending the tax credit, which is set to expire on Dec. 1, Robson says members will be meeting with their lawmakers in their home districts and urging them to also:

- Correct a faulty appraisal process.
- Improve housing credit conditions.
- Co-sponsor Net Operating Loss (NOL) relief legislation in the House and Senate.

Taken together, these four issues will not only create needed jobs for American workers quickly, but also stimulate demand for goods and services throughout Main Street America, Robson says.

For further information on supporting this effort, go to www.nahb.org/revivehousingnow. ▶

NATIONAL BEAT

NEWS FROM HOUSING'S GROUND ZERO ■ EDITED BY DEBORAH LEOPOLD

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Showtime!

Reserve early and receive great deals on admission to IBS 2010.

Have we got a great deal for you! For the first time in the 66-year history of the International Builders' Show (IBS), the NAHB is offering association members complimentary exhibit registration to the show, which will be held in Las Vegas from Jan. 19–22, 2010.

The free registration includes admission to the exhibit floor all four days of the show plus access to the opening ceremonies, the daily keynote speakers, and a tour of The New American Home.

Best of all, there are no outrageous conditions for taking advantage of this exclusive offer. You don't have to write a catchy tune or join the cast of a reality TV show. You just have to be an NAHB member, and you must register by Dec. 11. That's it.

JOE ROBSON
Chairman of the Board, NAHB
Washington, D.C.

The free, exhibit-only registration is just one of several IBS attendance options that the NAHB has developed to meet attendees' varied needs.

Full registration, which includes access to all educational programs, events, and the exhibit floor is $295 for members who register by Jan. 18; for first-time attendees who are NAHB members, full registration is $100.

We also have options for members who want to divide their time *(see page 52)*

between educational programs and the exhibit floor: a one-day education pass with four-day exhibit registration costs $100 if you register by Jan. 18; a two-day education pass with four-day exhibit registration costs $200, and again you must register by Jan. 18.

Moreover, spouses may register at no additional charge. For every type of registration—whether it's full show, exhibit floor only, or one of our other options—spouses receive the same registration for free.

Non-member fees for each type of registration are somewhat higher, but still a great value, and again, spouses receive complimentary registration.

No matter which registration option you choose, I can promise that attending the IBS will be one of the best business decisions that you make this year.

Despite the industry slowdown, the IBS is by far the nation's largest light-construction show and is our industry's premier educational venue. We have scheduled more than 175 educational programs on every housing-related subject from finance to design trends to help you and your business thrive. Likewise, the enormous array of products displayed on the exhibit floor will help you identify the products and services that are a perfect match for your buyers.

The educational programs and exhibit floor may be the heart of the IBS, but it certainly offers many other attractions. One of the most popular is The New American Home, which is sponsored by the National Council of the Housing Industry, the leading suppliers of the NAHB, and BUILDER.

The New American Home 2010 is shaping up to be a model of innovation in energy and resource efficiency. It is being built to the NAHB's Green Building Standard and will meet the requirements of the federal Energy Star program.

Among the other attractions at the IBS are daily keynote speakers, numerous networking opportunities, and grand-opening ceremonies that will get the show off to a spectacular start.

The NAHB has always offered early bird registration deals, but for 2010, the savings are the best ever. You can register online and learn everything you need to know at www.BuildersShow.com.

It's going to be a grand event, and I'm looking forward to welcoming each of you to the show in Las Vegas in January!

THE NAHB RESEARCH CENTER CORNER

Join Up

Join the NAHB Research Center's Building America industry team.

The Building America (BA) Program, sponsored by the DOE, is a research and development project for the enhancement of energy performance of new and existing homes. For more than 15 years, this program has been working with builders and remodelers to evaluate and adopt energy-efficient products, designs, and construction practices. The goal of the program is to achieve net-zero annual energy use in new homes by 2020. The Research Center is striving to create cost-effective solutions for energy-efficient homes and continues to solicit partners for our BA team.

The current program has three components. It:

- Works with builders, remodelers, and other partners from the design phase through construction to build prototype energy-efficient homes;
- Takes the lessons learned from the prototypes to enable the construction of communities of energy-efficient homes;
- Researches and develops individual systems to reduce the whole-house energy use.

By using a systems engineering approach to home building, BA forms teams of architects, engineers, builders, manufacturers, material suppliers, community planners, mortgage lenders, and trade contractors to develop better coordination and communication in the design and construction of new homes.

Building America offers a number of services to assist partners with designing and evaluating their next generation of products including:

- Design and engineering support to help builders achieve the biggest energy-efficiency bang for the buck and to make sure the house works as a system;
- Assistance with identifying new products and practices that will enhance the energy efficiency, durability, and comfort of new homes yet remain in keeping with current practice and the demands of a current client base;
- Connection with other BA industry partners to provide information about new products on the market and design assistance for integrating new products into current practice;
- Documentation of estimated energy performance by a professional third party;
- Assistance with developing support materials to help sell the added quality of new high-performance homes.

For more information about joining the Research Center's BA team, complete the form at www.nahbrc.com/BAcontact.

NAHB BRIEFS

Get Social

Social media, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and blogs, is quickly becoming a mainstay in modern marketing plans. For new-home builders considering it, social media is simply using Internet-based networking tools to generate exposure and sales opportunities.

But builders need to understand that using social media in marketing will not necessarily generate direct sales. Social media is a different kind of marketing tool than a sales center or even a website. It's more about building relationships.

"Home builders are asking us if social media works," says Dana Forrest, sales and marketing director at Simmons Homes in Tulsa, Okla. They want to know if a sale can be tracked to social media, she says.

"For us, this seems a little short-sighted. We look at our social media and networking efforts as a way to build long-term relationships. We know this won't result in immediate sales, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't invest our time and effort," Forrest says. "We know a strong relationship is not built overnight."

"just like building houses, managing expenses is all about the details."

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Potholed Recovery

The housing recovery is coming but it will be a bumpy ride.

HOUSING'S RECOVERY BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP BUT THE forward movement has been hesitant. The overall trend appears to be upward bound but that does not mean that it has been or will be a steady growth. Single-family permits, the earliest signal of housing's health, hesitated early in the year but returned to a steady albeit slow increase since. New-home sales have ratcheted up and down since the beginning of 2009 although the trend has been upward. Existing-home sales have bounced around the low 3 million mark on an annual basis for more than three quarters.

A hesitant housing recovery as that described above is not a typical housing recovery. Single-family housing starts usually bottom about two quarters before the end of a recession. As the recession ends, single-family starts average monthly growth rates between 5 percent and 8 percent. The soft upturn in single-family starts that began in January has not produced the kind of growth typical of an early recovery, and the NAHB forecast for 2010 does not envision the strong performance usually experienced in a "normal" housing recovery.

OVER-SUPPLY

The reasons for a slower-than-normal housing recovery occupy headlines and comply with basic economics—too much supply and not enough demand. The number of homes on the market is significantly larger than the demand, and that number is expected to expand as foreclosures grow.

The Census Bureau reports over two million vacant homes for sale, which includes newly built homes, and the National Association of Realtors reports almost 4 million existing homes for sale, which includes most of the vacant homes. There are less than 150,000 newly built and completed homes for sale, so the vast majority of the excess lies in the existing-home inventory.

Job losses will aggravate the over-supply of for-sale homes as laid-off workers cannot meet their mortgage payments and cannot sell their homes at a price that will allow them to pay off the mortgage. For the near term, unemployment is a much bigger foreclosure driver than interest rate resets or inappropriate mortgage instruments. Since job losses typically continue beyond a recovery in output, and foreclosures extend beyond that, the supply of foreclosed homes will continue to feed the excess into mid-2010. The excess need not be run down before new homes can be sold, but the overload will continue to put downward pressure on prices.

UNDER-DEMAND

Under normal conditions, an inventory of fewer than 300,000 newly built homes for sale would be quite comfortable. However, the current selling pace is so much lower that it would take eight to 10 months to sell the inventory at current demand rather than a more comfortable four to six months.

Consumer attitudes have improved as measured by the Michigan Consumer Sentiment and the Conference Board Consumer Confidence Indexes. But both measures have taken a step back in previous months and the attitudes toward buying a home have also seesawed since the beginning of 2009. The overall consumer attitude measures as well as the outlook for a home purchase are more positive now than at the beginning of the year. The NAHB-Wells Fargo Housing Market Index of builder sentiment has also shown improvement since March although not without a one-point dip in June.

UNCERTAINTY

Unfortunately, uncertainty breeds uncertainty so potential home buyers remain on the sidelines as the unsold inventory head winds persist. From a very low base of home buying, very small changes in consumer attitudes and underlying economic drivers swing demand back and forth. As house prices stabilize and employment losses slow and turn positive, buyers will gain more enthusiasm for buying a home. Low mortgage rates, the first-time home buyer tax credit, and low home prices have made buying a home very affordable. The recovery will persist, but it will be a bumpy one.

DAVID CROWE
Chief Economist
NAHB
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: dcrowe@nahb.com

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SETTING OUT

Startup builders look to the next horizon, undaunted by the recession and buoyed by a sense of purpose.

DIGGING IN: Eric Dille hopes to parlay his Denver-based remodeling company, B & D Professional Builders, into a new home building enterprise by early next year.

CELIN SERBO

BY JOHN CAULFIELD

JIM PREWITT AND TIM O'BRIEN expect energy efficiency to drive buyer demand in, respectively, North Carolina and Wisconsin. Eric Dille is banking on Denver's housing market to bounce back sooner and stronger than other Western metros. Partners Len Tylka and Dave Armstrong are seeking investors to manufacture hurricane-resistant homes in Orlando, Fla. And Josh Doyle believes his one-on-one relationship with customers will be the key to success for his year-old business in Toledo, Ohio.

Whether they are seeking redemption after being humbled—or spit out—by the current recession, or think they have something genuinely new to offer jaded and reluctant shoppers, startup builders such as these are filling the void created by so many failed builders having exited the playing field. How many more startup builders are preparing to get going is difficult to gauge, although there doesn't seem to be any shortage of former owners and officers of regional and national production builders who are rebooting or thinking about it, some more openly than others.

"People are sensing opportunities," observes Michael Maples, a principal of Danville, Calif.–based Trumark Homes, which launched a year ago and in August started building models for its first project,

a 39-home community in Upland, Calif., called Wyeth Cove. "It's less competitive than it was, and banks are starting to lend again."

Trumark Homes is part of Trumark Cos., an established developer that is looking for and providing lots to the home building community, focusing on markets where there's a dearth of new neighborhoods. Besides Upland, Trumark has negotiated bank and private-equity financing for a 5.5-acre parcel it is buying from the city of Brea, Calif., where it plans to build 60 single-family detached homes ranging from 1,200 to 2,200 square feet; and another parcel in Orange County where it will build 68 detached homes. Trumark is also in due diligence phases on two parcels in Northern California.

The company projects 60 closings next year, between 150 and 200 in 2011, and between 300 and 400 in 2012. It's marketing its products with the tagline "Creating New Traditions," which Maples explains is shorthand for "helping customers turn a house into a home." So, for example, gift baskets for new owners might include supplies for their first dinner party along with paint touchup kits.

GREEN SHOOTS

Predicting growth in a bad economy is something less than science, as Jim Prewitt discovered after starting Prewitt Custom Homes in New Hill, N.C., in December 2007. Prewitt thought his company would close 10 homes in 2008; by July 14, 2009, it had sold only three and expects to sell only two more through the remainder of this year.

That's okay with Prewitt, 46, who says he "wanted to slow down" after selling his stake in an 11-year-old builder, Homescape Building Co., where he and his partners had conflicting growth objectives. That selloff financed Prewitt's startup, which he runs with his wife, and gave him the chance to get back into the field again. He's building spec homes with "unlimited customization potential," and before he starts any house, Prewitt confers with real estate agents to figure out what type of home might sell best in each subdivision.

Prewitt's house designs aim to match the way people actually live. "I had one customer tell me, 'you think like a woman,'" Prewitt recalls, referring to the functional way his homes are laid out. The homes meet Energy Star guidelines, and Prewitt recently started taking classes to become a green builder using the NAHB standards.

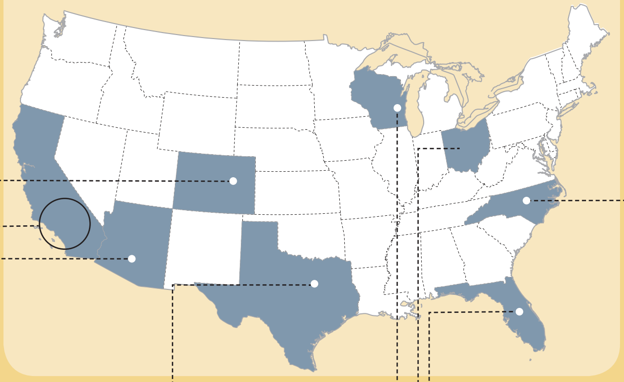
Also marketing green building aggressively is Tim O'Brien, 41, who incorporated Tim O'Brien Homes in Waukesha, Wis., in June 2007, a month after he was laid off by William Ryan Homes, whose Wisconsin division he ran for seven years. Back then, permits in the area were down 40 percent, but O'Brien managed to start 28 homes in 2008, making his company the 12th-largest builder in the Milwaukee market that year. O'Brien is a big advocate of total quality management, which he combines with his passion for energy efficiency. His company was one of eight builders nationwide to participate in the EPA's WaterSense pilot program, and all of his homes are 100 percent Energy Star certified. O'Brien recently began following the NAHB's green standards, and this summer his company was building a $350,000 zero-energy house.

GUIDING LIGHTS

O'Brien expects to start 50 homes this year and 60 in 2010. He's eyeing Illinois as his next market. But his company isn't likely to expand beyond its financial capacity because looking over his shoulder is Mark Neumann, a well-connected local developer who was instrumental in helping O'Brien get his business off the ground.

O'Brien put $100,000 into his startup, which he raised by cashing in his stock options from William Ryan Homes and taking equity out of his own home. He raised another $50,000 each from Neumann (whose brother Ken owned Neumann Homes in Illinois) and Neumann's son Matt, who is president of the family's development company. But three banks

STARTUPS SPRING UP ACROSS THE COUNTRY



DENVER

B & D Professional Builders. Three-year-old remodeler plans to expand into home building by January 2010.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

RSI Development. Offshoot of RSI Home Products. Founder Ronald Simon has committed $100 million to the home building venture.

Trumark Homes. Division of developer Trumark Communities. Is building in Upton, Calif., and owns land in Brea and Lake Forest, Calif.

DALLAS

Landon Homes. Started September 2008 by former Meritage Homes co-CEO John Landon. Should complete 100 homes in its first year.

PHOENIX

Joseph Carl Homes. Launched in June by former Engle Homes executive Carl Mulac. JEN Partners is providing financing. Expects to close first homes by year's end.

Hancock Communities. Owner Greg Hancock retrieved license for company name in 2008. Builder is now active in five communities.

Saddlebrook Homes. Started in 2007, stalled when market caved, but rebooted in July with Terraso Solution, a whole-house construction system.

WAUKESHA, WIS.

Tim O'Brien Homes. Incorporated in June 2007. Expects to start 50 homes in 2009. Green building is its calling card.

OHIO

Homes by Josh Doyle. Toledo-based builder launched in August 2008. Owner Josh Doyle sees opportunity in building quality, affordable homes quickly.

The Stafford Group. Dublin-based builder founded in November 2007. The company also does renovations.

ORLANDO, FLA.

HardShell Homes. Formed by two custom builders and a developer. Their plan is to manufacture affordable steel-framed modules from a plant here beginning this fall.

RALEIGH, N.C.

Prewitt Custom Homes. Started in December 2007. Expects to close five homes in 2009. Offers customizable, energy-efficient homes.

GOING WITH THE WIND: Len Tylka is teaming up with another Florida builder and developer to manufacture small, green, wind-resistant homes.

JOSH RITCHIE

that had offered to bankroll O'Brien's business pulled out when the credit market collapsed. "I had three homes in the ground, payroll, and vendors to pay," recalls O'Brien. Mark Neumann kicked in more cash and used his reputation to persuade other banks to lend. O'Brien eventually secured a $2 million credit line collateralized by his assets, and another $300,000 revolver.

Mark Neumann, a former U.S. Congressman who is now running for governor of Wisconsin, is providing O'Brien with lots through his development company, Neumann Developments, a major advantage for a startup builder that otherwise "would have to pay 70 percent to 75 percent of the appraised value of the land in cash," says Neumann. He thinks any startup's fatal mistake is spending more than it takes in, so he meets monthly with O'Brien to go over the home builder's books.

In Denver, Eric Dille is hoping his remodeling company, B & D Professional Builders, can be his "segue" into a new home building venture by early next year. His guide on that journey is Jeff Prager, a former builder and land developer, who teaches economics at the University of Colorado, and is president of Backroom Management Services, an accounting consultant.

The 37-year-old Dille has been building houses since he was 17, and his background includes stints with David Weekley Homes and D.R. Horton. He and his partner, 47-year-old contractor Greg Bickelhaupt, started B & D as a sideline with $15,000 in September 2006. Three weeks later, Dille got laid off along with 70 percent of Weekley's divisional workforce, and B & D suddenly became his full-time job. They've since expanded the business, which specializes in basement refinishing, to a projected $850,000 in revenue this year.

Dille, a former Marine, is gung ho about building for a Denver market he thinks is poised to recover and is about to experience a "mass migration from California." He believes he could start a home building company for around $500,000 if he can take down 20 lots cheaply, build them out, and sell the homes within 18 months. (His 1,800- to 2,200-square-foot homes would start at $350,000 and be built to allow owners to age in place.) Dille wants his first two houses to be in the ground by January, and his ultimate goal is to build 125 homes per year. At presstime, Dille was negotiating to acquire 100 unfinished lots in the sprawling Castle Pines North development between Denver and Colorado Springs.

Prager—who started Strauss Homes in 1994, which grew into a $26 million business closing 137 homes annually before he liquidated the company in 2003 to retire briefly—sees volatile market conditions leading to "the greatest resurgence in small business since World War II." But while he's been hired as Dille's advisor and "mentor" (Dille's word), Prager's chief function seems to be tempering his protégé's exuberance. "It's a fun stage we're at right now, but it's also a frustrating stage," says Prager. "You have to spend the time at the front end to get things right, or you'll pay for it at the back end."

STORM CHASER

Len Tylka doesn't need mentoring. The owner of LTL Builders in *(see page 62)*

STANDING APART: With guidance from developer Mark Neumann, Tim O'Brien is quickly growing his business into one of Wisconsin's biggest builders.

West Palm Beach, Fla., has been developing and building custom homes since 1971. He is also one of Florida's leading authorities on building codes. But Tylka and two partners—Pensacola developer Dan Gilmore, and Dave Armstrong, who owns Armstrong Custom Homes in Melbourne—are sailing uncharted waters with their new company HardShell Homes, which would target workforce buyers with steel-framed homes made in an industrial plant in Orlando.

The plan, says Tylka, is to produce homes that range from 800 to 1,600 square feet and sell for between $70,000 and $140,000. The seminal features of these homes, which would be assembled on slabs, are their resistance to winds up to 175 miles per hour and their manufacture and assembly to the NAHB's green building standards. Tylka says that if financing is in place (the initial investment needed would be "seven figures"), production could begin in November. The factory is near two ports, and Tylka foresees distribution beyond Florida to other Gulf states and Caribbean markets.

Armstrong has experience with system-built construction, having worked five years ago with the Georgia-based modular home producer Precision Homes. That alliance was undone by the economy, and because Precision wasn't green enough for Armstrong, a member of Florida's Green Building Coalition and an NAHB-certified green verifier. He also favors affordability and wants HardShell's mix to include a 1,000-square-foot house with a $55,000 price tag.

Tylka and Armstrong think trailer parks could be fertile targets for HardShell's houses, especially if the state ever follows through on the threat to ban mobile homes, a threat that grows louder with each successive hurricane season.

DOING IT ALL

Recessionary storms that crippled Ohio's housing market didn't deter Josh Doyle from quitting Owens Corning's financial leadership program in August 2008 to start his own business, Homes by Josh Doyle. Since then, his Toledo-based company has built five houses, including his own.

This turn of events wouldn't surprise anyone who knows the 27-year-old Doyle. His father Steve is a veteran home builder in Lima, Ohio, and Doyle was designing homes for his dad's business when he was 15 and working on construction crews.

Doyle's startup's costs were virtually nil because he's a one-man show, handling sales, design, and construction management. (He's drawn house plans on the back of a paper towel in a prospect's kitchen.) His customers secure construction loans, and he has no land costs because he only builds on owners' or developers' lots.

The opportunity Doyle sees for his company is to build quality, affordable homes quickly. He recently completed one house in 59 days (his normal cycle time is about 90). Most of his product has been in the 2,600-square-foot range priced under $200,000 (excluding the land cost). Those homes include 3/4-inch floors, engineered wood panels on the outside walls, engineered trusses, and ample insulation.

Doyle says what's critical to his business right now is maintaining "my rapport with customers." He recently started a house for his first referral, which he got, he thinks, because "when you do what I do, you become friends with the people you work for." All of his customers recently attended his wife Amy's baby shower.

While he never wants to lose that buyer connection, Doyle can't go it alone forever if he wants to reach his goal of building two homes per month. He's been putting in 80-plus hour weeks preparing one of his homes for the local Parade of Homes this fall. So when he's asked when he'll hire his first employee, Doyle takes a deep breath and replies, "It's not too far off." **B**

DAVID NEVALA

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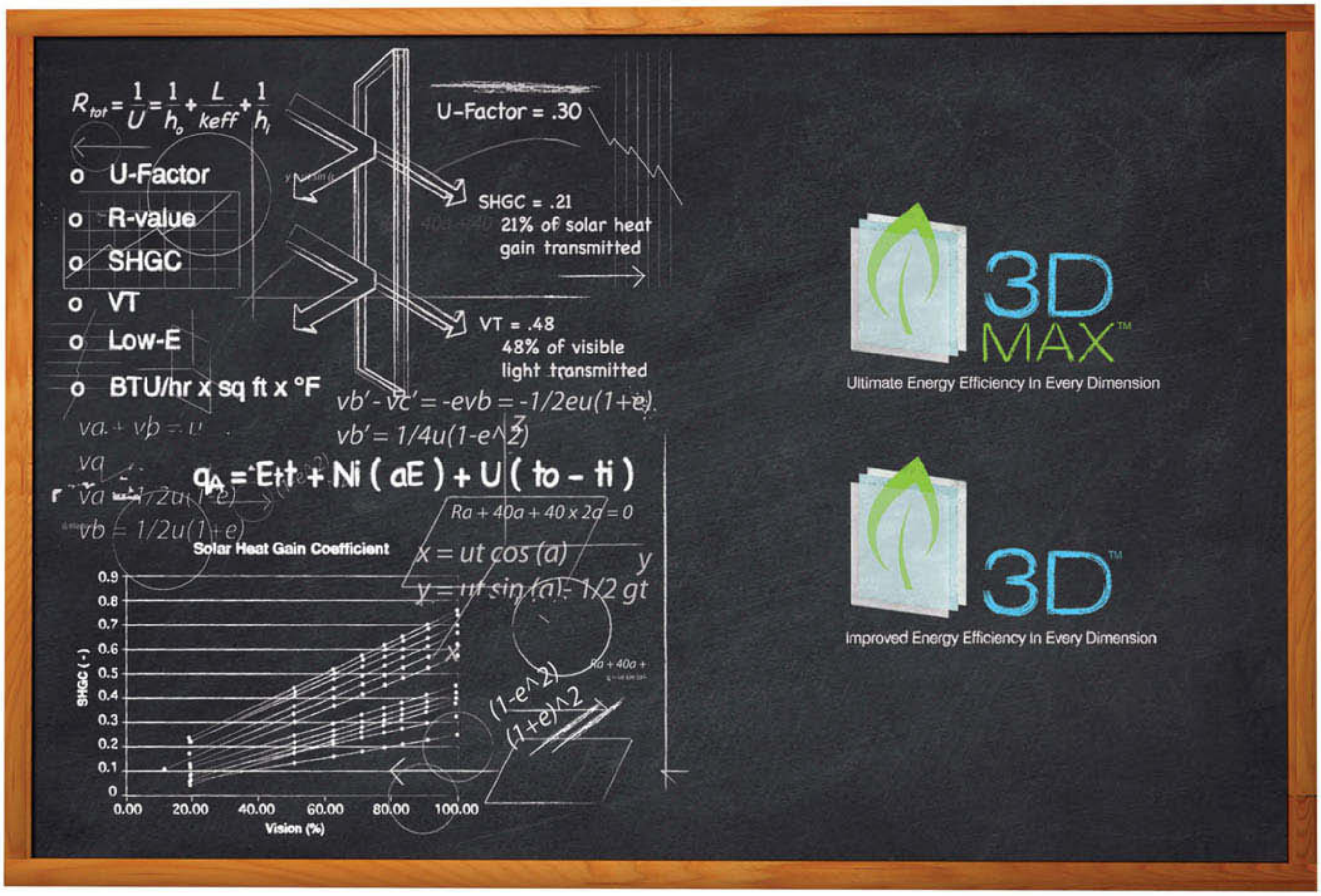

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Builder SPECIAL SECTION

Viewpoint

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2009 WINDOWS AND DOORS

GET ON THE GREEN

Energy-efficient windows and doors help you build a more eco-friendly home

COOL COVER: Margarido House's ample first-floor glazing is shaded by an awning made of recycled aluminum grating, an off-the-shelf product. This $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch-thick "eyebrow" provides ambient filtered light throughout the day with the shielding effect of a solid shade.

MARIKO REED

GREEN WITH A VIEW

Eco-friendly homes come in all shapes, sizes, and styles, but inevitably have one thing in common: Their systems work in concert to achieve maximum energy performance and minimal carbon output. Windows play a pivotal role in any system, given their effect on solar gain, passive ventilation, natural daylighting, moisture control, air-tightness, and, of course, good looks. The projects on the following pages show many different ways to be window wise.

BY JENNY SULLIVAN

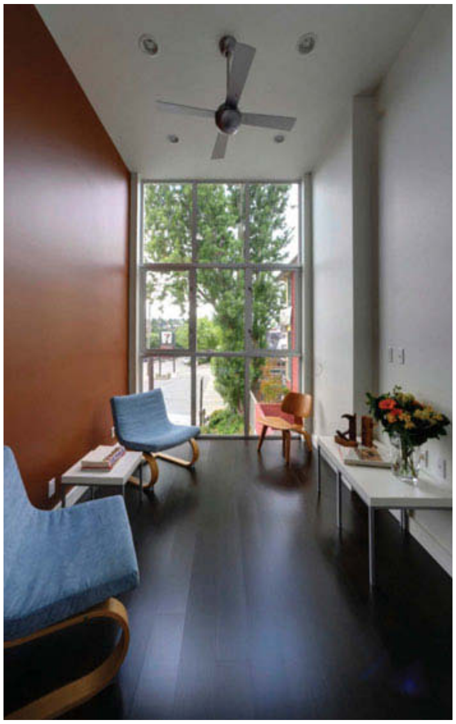
SMOOTH OPERATOR

It's hard to believe a 4,600-square-foot house with 80 windows and doors could be green, much less LEED Platinum certified, with efficiencies that beat California's Title 24 energy standards by 55 percent. But this Oakland, Calif., residence has it all.

Before construction, the window plan was put to the test in a modeling program that calculated the impact (based on placement) of operable versus non-operable windows, explains builder Mike McDonald. "We were able to eliminate a lot of superfluous operable features that didn't contribute to cross-ventilation. This helped from a cost perspective, achieved a lower U value overall, and improved aesthetics. A lot of the windows we'd originally planned as operable didn't look as nice as fixed glazing."

The strategic window schedule combines thermally broken aluminum windows by AlumaTherm—a third of which are operable—with a NanaWall retractable wall system. Deep eaves and a dramatically cantilevered awning accentuate the window arrays while protecting interior spaces from the hot summer sun. Other green features include: an Energy Star cool roof; a 600-square-foot "living roof" and deck; LED lighting; in-floor hydronic heating; solar electric power and thermal hot water; smart-home automation; energy-efficient appliances; on-site water reclamation tanks; permeable paving; concrete countertops made with fly ash and recycled glass; indoor air quality management system; drought-tolerant landscaping; zero-VOC paints; and locally sourced, sustainable products such as metal tiles made from discarded kiln shelves.

PROJECT: Margarido House, Oakland, Calif.; **BUILDER:** McDonald Construction and Development, Oakland, Calif.; **ARCHITECT:** Plumbob Architects, Philadelphia; **WINDOWS:** Alumatherm and NanaWall Systems



NICE SLICE

Townhome "four packs" are a common infill solution in Seattle. This time around, CAST Architecture made the most of a split-zoned lot (a small sliver of which was designated commercial) by squeezing in an extra live/work space for a total of five units. But it wasn't easy, considering the commercial slice was only 10 feet wide. To create a feeling of spaciousness in the skinny unit, the architects vaulted the living room ceiling to 12 feet and glazed the entire end wall with a grid of low-E, thermally broken aluminum frame windows by Marlin, some of which are operable. This move facilitated natural daylighting and cross ventilation, contributing to a Built Green four-star rating.

"Thermally broken frames don't sweat when it gets chilly out, so moisture isn't a problem," notes architect Stefan Hampden. "Aluminum is also beneficial in that it can be recycled over and over again. And these windows have a clear anodized finish so they never have to be painted."

All that—and it looks cool. Advanced framing with rim joists contributed to the window wall's sleek façade by eliminating the need for headers. "The nice thing about these windows is that instead of mulling units together to create groupings, the manufacturer built the whole thing up at once," Hampden adds. "That way you don't have the thickness of an extra flange in there, and you end up with a thinner profile."

Other green features include: high-efficiency boilers for radiant heat and hot water; R-26 wall and R-50 roof spray-in insulation; electric-vehicle charging stations; rain screen siding; and bamboo flooring pre-piped for solar hot water.

PROJECT: Fremont Townhomes, Seattle; **BUILDER:** Albion Group, Seattle; **ARCHITECT:** CAST Architecture, Seattle; **WINDOWS:** Marlin Windows

PHOTOS: TOP: MARIKO REED; BOTTOM: STEFAN HAMPDEN

GLASS MENAGERIE

This 16-story, mixed-use tower in Portland, Ore.'s Pearl District takes the form of a basic box, but within that box are some poetic variations. Exterior architect John Holmes with Holst Architecture fashioned the window schedule to resemble the fractal patterns found in natural rock formations. The stacked bricks comprising the solid portion of the façade adhere to uniform specifications (each vertical pier between windows measures 2 feet, as does each horizontal band between floors). But the window sizes are sporadic, with openings varying in width increments of 5, 7, or 9 feet. The brick shell forms a lattice for a commercial-grade extruded aluminum window system by local manufacturer Custom Window Co., explains co-developer Geoff Wenker. "We also randomized the operable parts, so no two units are exactly the same."

The building's east-west orientation was unavoidable given site constraints, but a heat recovery ventilation system helps even out the effects of solar gain. "When the sun is hitting the south side of the building, those units might be in cooling mode, while the north-facing units are in heating mode on the same day," Wenker says. "The heat source pump captures heat from the south units and transfers it to the north side. The main boiler never has to come on."

That's just one of many features allowing this LEED Platinum-certified building to use 30 percent less energy and water than similar post-tension concrete structures. Other green features include: a green roof with 4,000 square feet of vegetation and planters for stormwater filtration; externally vented kitchens; dual-flush toilets; bicycle storage; electric car charging stations; and proximity to public transit. In addition, 90 percent of construction debris was recycled.

PROJECT: 937 Condominiums, Portland, Ore.; **BUILDER:** Andersen Construction, Portland; **ARCHITECTS:** Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects, Portland; and Holst Architecture, Portland; **WINDOWS:** Custom Window Co.

FINE-TUNED

The budget for this green makeover of a 1960s tri-level home was rather modest, so VaST architecture left the footprint alone and didn't change much in the way of façade composition. Most of the original window openings were kept intact, although the team swapped out the home's drafty old glazing and replaced it with an insulated, fiberglass-framed product by Serious Materials with high-performance tinted glazing to control heat gain.

"The performance upside of fiberglass is that it expands and contracts at the same rate as the glazing," explains VaST studio manager and designer Brandy LeMae. This reduces internal stresses and makes the entire window system and weatherstripping more airtight. "This is a big deal in a climate with big temperature swings," LeMae adds.

Another advantage? "Serious Materials allows you to 'tune' the tinted glazing on your windows and adjust the heat gain coefficient depending on which direction they are facing," says LeMae, noting that the specs for this home included two different coefficients. The remodel also included a new kitchen and a reconfiguration of select interior spaces. Other green features include: Icynene insulation; high-efficiency CFL lighting; and a heat recovery ventilation system. *(see page 70)*

PROJECT: Olsen Residence, Boulder, Colo.; **BUILDER:** RandomSPACE, Boulder; **ARCHITECT:** VaST architecture, Boulder; **WINDOWS:** Serious Materials

PHOTOS: TOP: CHRIS HODNEY; BOTTOM: BEFORE PHOTO: COURTESY VAST; AFTER PHOTO: DAN O'CONNOR

SEALED DEAL

THIS 2,500-SQUARE-FOOT HOUSE IS IN Falmouth, Maine, where winter temperatures routinely plunge into the 20s. And it doesn't have a furnace.

This feat was made possible, in part, with an airtight double shell, extra insulation, a thermal concrete slab, and triple-glazed Thermotech fiberglass fixed and casement windows. Large, operable windows on the third story allow hot air to circulate up and vent out in summertime, and south-facing windows are capped with deep overhangs for shade protection.

Builder Dan Kolbert and architect Phil Kaplan estimate the triple-glazed windows cost as much as 50 percent more than comparable double-glazed units, but say this worthy investment will likely bolster the energy performance of this blow-tested and soon to be LEED Platinum-certified house by an extra 20 percent. "We design with an actual budget as well as an energy budget in mind," says Kaplan. "If we want to keep the mechanical system small and make it a truly low-energy house, we can only afford so many square inches of glass. If the walls are R40 and the roof is R60 and your typical double-pane windows are around R3, you are creating a huge energy leak in your house. Using triple-paned windows made a big difference here (they have R values up to 6.25) but we also had to be strategic about where we put them."

Other green features include: roof-mounted photovoltaics for solar electric and hot water; electric on-demand heater for winter; energy recovery ventilator; and low-flow plumbing fixtures.

PROJECT: Double Thick Walls on the Dime, Falmouth, Maine; **BUILDER:** Dan Kolbert Building & Renovations, Portland, Maine; **ARCHITECT:** Kaplan Thompson Architects, Portland; **WINDOWS:** Thermotech Windows

SUITE SUCCESS

ENERGY STAR–RATED WINDOWS by Marvin play a leading role in this 3,600-square-foot lakeside, Arts and Crafts–style home, the first LEED-certified residence in the state of Minnesota. "We made a concerted effort to go green, but because this was a spec home, it also had to be financially feasible," says builder Ed Northway.

To keep costs in check, Northway assembled four Ultimate Double Hung windows (two are mulled together) and four transoms in a dramatic pattern to frame the view of the adjacent lake. Simulated divided lites with spacer bars give the pine-clad windows a classic old school look, while low-E glass coatings enhance energy efficiency. An exterior bronze finish complements the home's natural cedar siding.

Other green features include: spray foam insulation; ICF foundation; a tankless water heater; paperless drywall below grade (to prevent mold); a high-performance HVAC system; foundation drainage; Energy Star–rated appliances; old-growth tree preservation; and native landscaping.

PROJECT: Gull Lake Home, Brainerd, Minn.; **BUILDER:** Northway Construction, Baxter, Minn.; **ARCHITECT:** Kevin Yeager, Brainerd; **WINDOWS:** Marvin Windows and Doors

PHOTOS: TOP: JAMIE BROADBENT; BOTTOM: RICK HAMMER

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OPEN WIDE: This folding glass wall system creates large openings from 6 feet to 320 feet, and a variety of the systems and glazings offered will meet Energy Star requirements. Available with an aluminum-frame with a powder-coated finish or a wood-frame with water-based finishes, the versatile system can be ordered in various configurations, including this window/door combination. ■ **NanaWall Systems.** 800-873-5673. www.nanawall.com.

ENERGY STARS

If you're looking for a product that's eligible for the tax credit or just want to save your buyers energy and money, these windows and doors are for you.

BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

At presstime, the price of oil continues to move in an upward trajectory as more evidence trickles in that the economic outlook is improving—albeit slightly. And everyone knows what that means: With each price jump, it gets more expensive for homeowners to heat and cool their houses. Fuel costs have been increasing steadily since the global economic collapse drove crude oil prices down to $36.51 per barrel on Jan. 16, 2009.

This is partly why the country is in conservation mode, and if President Obama has his way, it will become even more important in the coming years.

The president already showed his commitment to energy efficiency when he signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, legislation that includes a provision for homeowners to receive a tax credit of up to $1,500 for energy-efficient replacement windows and doors, among other improvements. In addition, newer, more stringent Energy Star guidelines for windows and doors will take effect in January 2010.

This special section on Windows and Doors (and related items such as hardware) features products that are designed with energy efficiency in mind. It includes high-performance windows and doors that are at least Energy Star rated or eligible for the stimulus bill tax credit. It also includes windows and doors that exceed the bill's requirement that eligible products have a U-factor rating of .30 and a solar heat gain coefficient rating of .30.

There are products here to fit any architectural style and almost any budget. Take a look for yourself, then go forth and help your buyers save energy—and money.

OPEN CASE: The Ultimate casement window features energy-efficient low-E II insulating glass with argon, which keeps heat inside in the winter and outside in the summer. Available in sizes up to 40 inches wide by 92 inches tall, the window comes with wood interiors and extruded aluminum cladding in 19 colors. A simulated check rail and a wide, bottom rail can be used to create the look of a double-hung. ■ **Marvin Windows & Doors. 888-537-8266. www.marvincasement.com.**

BRONZE AGE: Part of the Solid Bronze Collection, this Tubular Gripset handle features a satin nickel escutcheon, concealed exterior screws, and an option for various lever or knob designs inside. It comes standard with a tubular latch and deadbolt. Nine levers and two knob designs are available. ■ **Ashley Norton. 800-393-1097. www.ashleynorton.com.**

BLOCK THIS: Solar Block Plus acrylic block windows have a smoke-colored tint that protects homes from UV rays and makes the windows more energy efficient. The Energy Star–rated products measure 2 inches thick and have a solar heat gain coefficient of less than .34 when used in vinyl windows and .40 when used in aluminum. They are available as fixed or operable casement or awning windows in a variety of sizes. ■ **Hy-Lite by U.S. Block Windows. 888-256-2599. www.hy-lite.com.**

CREDIT CHECK: Windows with the manufacturer's energy tax credit glass packages have a U-factor rating of .30 or less and a solar heat gain coefficient of .30 or less. The packages allow builders and homeowners to easily identify the products that are eligible for a tax credit under the new stimulus bill. The five glass package options are available on select products and styles. ■ **Simonton Windows. 800-746-6686. www.simonton.com.**

INTERIOR DESIGN: The Designer Series wood window is the manufacturer's most energy-efficient product. Available in a variety of configurations and styles, the windows come with double- or triple-glazed glass options with blinds and shades between the panes. The blinds provide additional energy efficiency, offering a 43 percent reduction in solar heat gain when compared to room-side blinds. ■ **Pella. 800-374-4758. www.pella.com.**

UPlink // FOR MORE PRODUCT INFORMATION, VISIT EBUILD, HANLEY WOOD'S INTERACTIVE PRODUCT CATALOG, AT WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM/PRODUCTS OR EBUILD.COM.

WELL FARE: The modular stakWEL Window Well System can accommodate virtually any foundation depth and features high-density polyethylene inserts that add strength and rigidity. Corrosion-resistant and maintenance-free, it features a built-in grip/step that facilitates a safe exit and eliminates the need for a fixed ladder. ■ **Bilco. 800-854-9724. www.bilco.com.**

EURO FLASH: Inspired by European windows, the push-out casement and awning wood windows come standard with energy-efficient LoE2-270 double-pane insulating glass, enabling them to meet Energy Star guidelines in all climate zones. This glazing blocks 83 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays. Windows come standard in pine, but other wood options are available. ■ **Kolbe. 800-955-8177. www.kolbe-kolbe.com.**

VINYL ANALYSIS: The manufacturer has upgraded its eight standard vinyl window product lines to be Energy Star compliant. As a result, features such as low-E glass and argon gas are standard. For even better thermal performance, the company offers additional options such as triple glazing, foam-filled frames, and krypton/argon blends. ■ **Crystal Window & Door. 800-472-9988. www.crystalwindows.com.**

TUNNEL VISION: Energy Star–rated Sun Tunnel tubular skylights with insulated low-E tempered and insulated low-E laminated glazings offer three times more protection against solar heat gain. In addition, the glazings resist condensation twice as long as clear glass and protect interiors by reflecting most of the sun's fade-causing rays. ■ **Velux. 800-888-3589. www.veluxusa.com.**

VALUES PROPOSITION: The manufacturer claims its WAP Series replacement windows offer 12 times more energy savings per household than other common weatherization measures. Designed for Weatherization Assistance Program agencies to help low-income families reduce energy costs, the windows are available in vinyl or fiberglass with R-values up to 11. ■ **Serious Materials. 800-797-8159. www.seriousmaterials.com.**

STEEL THIS DOOR: The Executive Collection of steel entry and patio doors are marked by intricate panels and molding detail. Entry systems feature heavy-gauge steel, a durable paint finish, and sidelites. Available in various configurations and sizes, patio doors can be outfitted with glass inserts, custom hardware, and sliding screens. The doors are Energy Star rated. ■ **Tru Tech Doors. 877-276-5110. www.trutech.ca.**

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LOW DOWN: This casement window is made from heavy-duty mat and roving fiberglass that resists scratching and will not warp, rot, or become brittle in any conditions. Outfitted with the manufacturer's Zo-e-shield 5 glazing packages, it will achieve a U-factor of .28 and solar heat gain coefficient of .18. The window meets energy tax credits requirements as well as 2010 Energy Star guidelines. ■ **Weather Shield Windows & Doors. 800-477-6808. www.weathershield.com.**

SUN POWER: The Solar Powered Dimmer allows homeowners to control the amount of natural light entering the maker's new or existing 10-inch Energy Star tubular skylight. The dimmer requires no hard wiring, resulting in quicker and less-expensive installation. A three-button remote control operates the shade from inside the home. ■ **ODL. 800-odl-4you. www.odl.com.**

LOGO WEAR: The manufacturer's new Eco-Excel line can provide homeowners with up to 70 percent higher energy efficiency in summer and 45 percent higher energy efficiency in winter. The 400 Series window (shown) comes in standard sizes and features a Perma-Shield cladding in 21 colors and seven interior wood species. ■ **Andersen Corp. 800-426-4261. www.andersenwindows.com.**

MAD MAX: The 3D MAX energy-efficiency package is featured on the manufacturer's high-performing fiberglass and vinyl windows, such as the Tuscany Series shown here. The glazing package often carries as much as a 26 percent energy-efficient upgrade, and customers can save up to 10 percent up front by purchasing the package rather than ordering the same components separately. ■ **Milgard Windows & Doors. 800-645-4273. www.milgard.com.**

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OLD WORLD: The Archetypes Collection features three lines of elegantly designed door hardware, including this Chateau tubular handle-set. Cast in bronze, the mortise lockset has a covered cylinder crowned by a shelled motif and acanthus vines. It is shown in pewter bronze that will continue to age. ■ **Baldwin Hardware Corp.** 800-566-1986. www.baldwinhardware.com.

LONG STORY: Using a new process the manufacturer calls "long-fiber injection" and made with polyurethane rather than polyester, this fiberglass door can withstand extreme abuse, including being hit with lumber traveling in excess of 35 miles per hour. The durable and energy-efficient door is available in three lines and 16 designs including smooth surface and woodgrain options. ■ **Jeld-Wen.** 800-877-9482. www.jeld-wen.com.

AMAZING GLAZING: When outfitted with Solarban XL70 low-E glazing with argon, the Series 1100 windows and Series 800 sliding patio doors are eligible for the $1,500 tax credit in the stimulus bill. The vinyl windows and doors are built with a "self-squaring" feature that ensures a proper fit during installation. Windows are available in a variety of configurations such as double hung, slider, and casement. ■ **Superseal Window and Door Co.** 800-521-6704. www.supersealwindows.com.

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TOTAL RECLAMATION: The eco-savvy Inlay Collection handle blends reclaimed wood with recycled-content tumbled bronze. It measures 2 1/2 inches by 10 inches and is offered with a choice of four inlaid lever designs and three handles. The line is offered in white bronze with 95 percent pre-consumer recycled content and silicon bronze with 90 percent pre-consumer recycled content. ■ **Sun Valley Bronze. 208-788-3631. www.sunvalleybronze.com.**

OUTSIDE SLIDER: Designed for large openings measuring up to 13 1/2 feet tall, the Beefy Bifold can open a home to the great outdoors. The system is constructed with a top-hung and center-pivoting design that allows taller and wider panels than most other folding doors. Panels are available in all aluminum, aluminum with wood interior, and all wood. ■ **Weiland Sliding Doors and Windows. 760-722-8828. www.weilandslidingdoors.com.**

HIGH FIBER: High-performance Ultrex windows are now available in custom sizes in 1/64-inch increments. Available in single- and double-hungs, gliders, and direct glaze polygons, the line is made with a pultruded fiberglass that is eight times stronger than vinyl and highly resistant to dings, scratches, and warping. The line comes in six exterior colors. ■ **Integrity Windows and Doors. 888-419-0076. www.integritywindows.com.**

DOUBLE STRENGTH: The Primo Collection of vinyl windows come standard with double-strength low-E glass, but the line may also be upgraded with an Energy Saver Plus package that includes insulating glass with Super Spacer thermoset structural foam and argon gas between the panes. This combination improves energy performance on average by 10 percent over the standard offering. ■ **Jeld-Wen. 800-877-9482. www.jeld-wen.com.**

AIR VENT: The manufacturer's 160 Daylighting System now comes with an optional ventilation add-on kit for use in moist areas such as baths and laundry rooms. The fan attaches to the Daylighting System so homeowners can bring in fresh air as well as daylight. ■ **Solatube. 888-765-2882. www.solatube.com.**

FRENCH CONNECTION: This fiberglass-clad French patio door uses tempered insulated glass with options such as Zo-e-shield 5 or argon gas in the airspace to achieve a U-factor of .30 and a solar heat gain coefficient of .30. The panels are 1 3/4 thick and are filled with polyurethane foam insulation for six times the energy efficiency of solid wood doors. ■ **Peachtree Doors and Windows. 800-732-2499. www.peachtreedoor.com.**

UPlink // FOR MORE PRODUCT INFORMATION, VISIT EBUILD, HANLEY WOOD'S INTERACTIVE PRODUCT CATALOG, AT WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM/PRODUCTS OR EBUILD.COM.

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HEAT MISER: With a U-factor rating of .30 and a solar heat gain coefficient as low as .27, these windows meet new stricter Energy Star qualifications that will take effect in 2010. Additional features such as dual- or triple-pane options and low-E or argon-fill will lower the U-factor to .20 and the solar heat gain coefficient to .23. ■ **Ply Gem Windows. 609-546-0704. www.plygemwindows.com.**

FOAM CALL: A new addition to the Gallery Collection, this garage door now comes with 1 3/8- or 2-inch-thick polyurethane insulation options, which nearly double the thermal protection of current models in the collection. It features CFC-free, polyurethane foam injected between two layers of heavy-gauge steel with a thermal break that creates an R-value of 12.9 or 17.2. Standard features include 18-gauge steel hinges and nylon rollers. ■ **Clopay. 800-225-6729. www.clopaydoor.com.**

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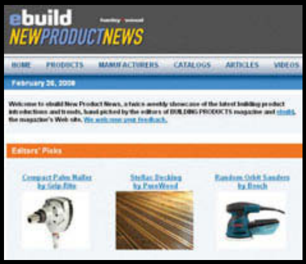

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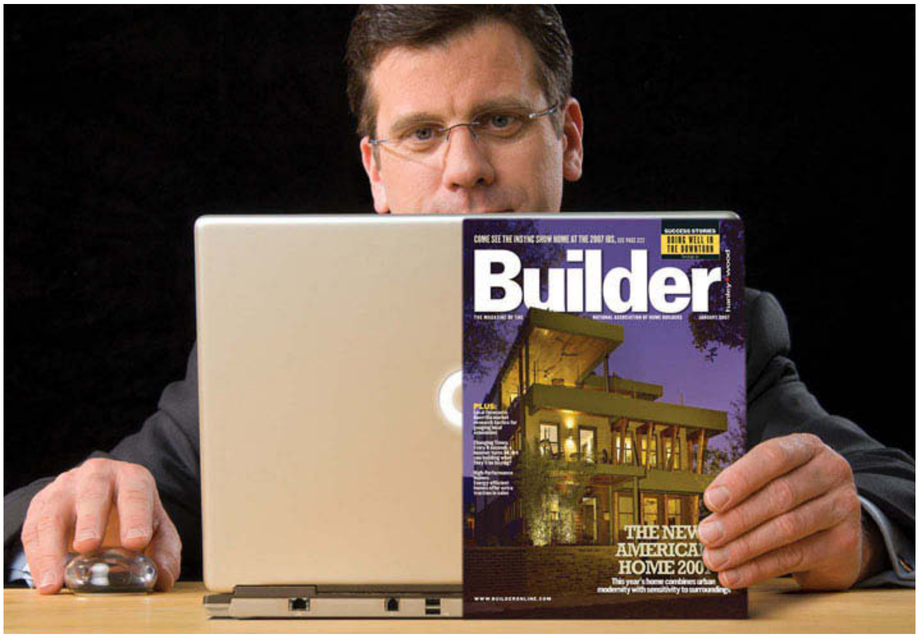

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First Floor: 1,807 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 1,063 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,870 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 40' - 0" X 76' - 10" ■ **Foundation:** Slab

This home and the three on the next page are designed to serve a market in need of flexibility. Note both the similarities and variations that would make this group of plans (16 in all) ideal for a small subdivision targeting first-time homebuyers, empty-nesters, or both.

PLAN # **HWBI110001** ■ **5-SET** $915 ■ **8-SET** $970 ■ **REPRO** $1,225 ■ **CAD** $2,085 ■ **PDF** $1,288

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PLAN # HWB1110002 ■ 5-SET $915 ■ 8-SET $970 ■ REPRO $1,225 ■ CAD $2,085 ■ PDF $1,288

First Floor: 2,080 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 638 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,718 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 40' - 0" X 83' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Slab

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Square Footage: 2,130 ■ **Bedrooms:** 2 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 40' - 0" X 81' - 6" ■ **Foundation:** Slab

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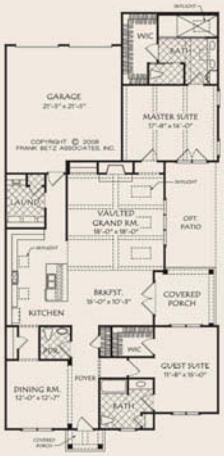

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Square Footage: 2,147 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 ■ **Dimensions:** 40' - 0" X 83' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Slab

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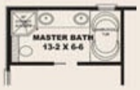
Square Footage: 1,327 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 ■
Dimensions: 46' - 0" X 36' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Slab



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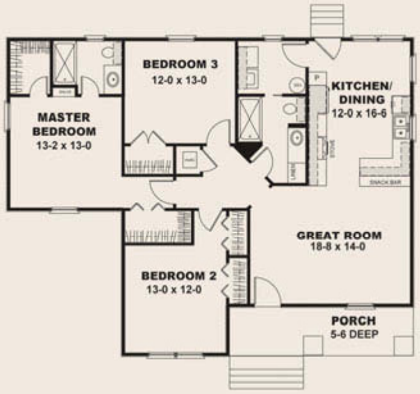

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PLAN # HWB1110005 ■ 5-SET $620 ■ 8-SET $665
■ REPRO $820 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF $820

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PLAN # HWB1110006 ■ 5-SET $720 ■ 8-SET $765
■ REPRO $920 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF $920

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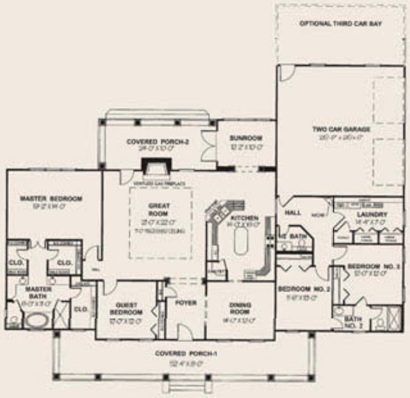
Square Footage: 2,440 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■
Dimensions: 67' - 0" X 88' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Finished Basement

Square Footage: 2,614 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 80' - 0" X 63' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Slab



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PLAN # HWB1110007 ■ 5-SET $770 ■ 8-SET $815
■ REPRO $970 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF $970

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Square Footage: 2,818 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 77' - 0" X 72' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Unfinished Basement

PLAN # HWB1110008 ■ 5-SET $770 ■ 8-SET $815 ■ REPRO $970 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF $970

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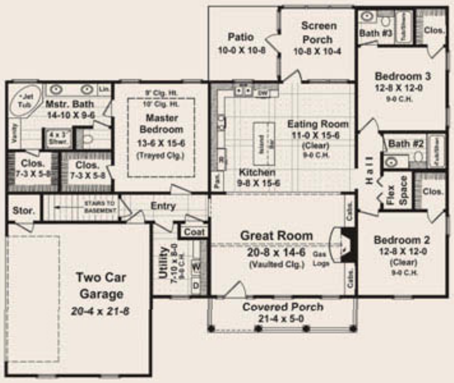
Square Footage: 1,818 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 63' - 4" X 53' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Unfinished Basement



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PLAN # HWB1110009 ■ 5-SET $645 ■ 8-SET N/A ■ REPRO $805 ■ CAD $1,305 ■ PDF $805

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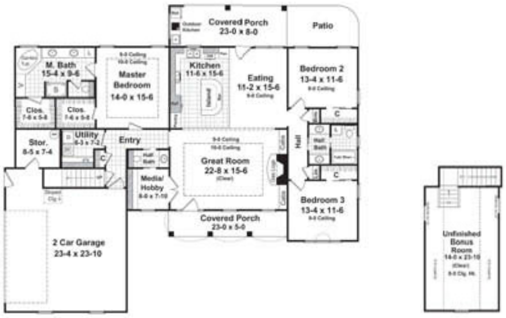
Square Footage: 2,000 ■ **Bonus Space:** 359 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 69' - 0" X 59' - 10" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab



PLAN # HWB1110010 ■ 5-SET $705 ■ 8-SET N/A ■ REPRO $865 ■ CAD $1,415 ■ PDF $865

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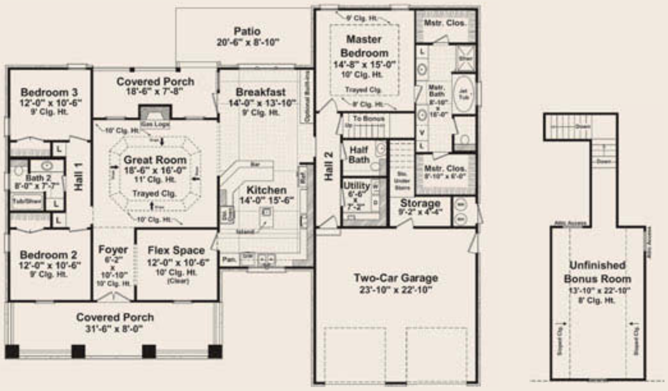
Square Footage: 2,067 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 70' - 0" X 56' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab



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REPRO $865 ■ CAD $1,415 ■ PDF $865

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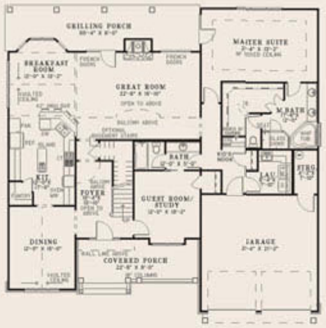
PLAN # HWB1110012 ■ 5-SET $705 ■ 8-SET N/A ■
REPRO $865 ■ CAD $1,415 ■ PDF $865

Square Footage: 2,200 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 65' - 6" X 79' - 6" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab

First Floor: 2,084 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 671 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,755 sq. ft. ■
Bedrooms: 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 57' - 4" X 55' - 10" ■
Foundation: Crawlspace, Slab



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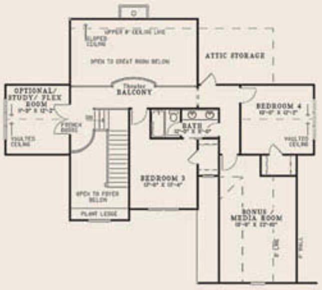

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PLAN # HWB1110013 ■ 5-SET N/A ■ 8-SET $860 ■
REPRO $1,150 ■ CAD $1,950 ■ PDF $1,150

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PLAN # **HWB1110014** ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** $805 ■ **REPRO** $1,060 ■ **CAD** $1,800 ■ **PDF** $1,060

First Floor: 1,595 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 875 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,470 sq. ft. ■ **Bonus Space:** 389 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 47' - 4" X 58' - 8" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab

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Square Footage: 2,405 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 65' - 4" X 67' - 2" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab

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PLAN # **HWB1110015** ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** $805 ■ **REPRO** $1,060 ■ **CAD** $1,800 ■ **PDF** $1,060

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Square Footage: 2,096 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 69' - 2" X 74' - 10" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab

PLAN # **HWB1110016** ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** $805 ■ **REPRO** $1,060 ■ **CAD** $1,800 ■ **PDF** $1,060

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Square Footage: 2,454 ■ **Bonus Space:** 256 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■
Bathrooms: 2 ■ **Dimensions:** 80' - 6" X 66' - 6" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace

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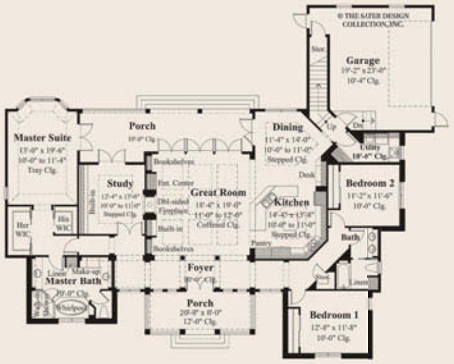

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PLAN # HWBI110017 ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** N/A ■
REPRO $1,227 ■ **CAD** $2,209 ■ **PDF** $1,227

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PLAN # HWBI110018 ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** N/A ■
REPRO $1,368 ■ **CAD** N/A ■ **PDF** $1,368

First Floor: 2,084 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 648 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,732 sq. ft. ■
Bonus Space: 375 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 $^1/_2$ ■ **Dimensions:**
60' - 6" X 94' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Slab

FIRST

SECOND

Square Footage: 2,191 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 $^1/_2$ ■
Dimensions: 62' - 10" X 73' - 6" ■ **Foundation:** Slab, Unfinished Basement

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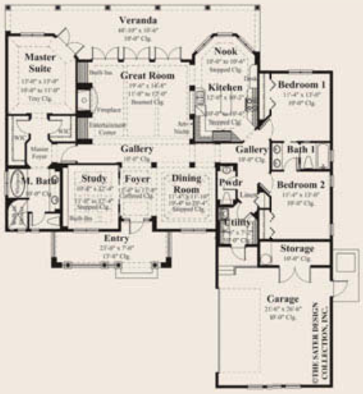

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PLAN # HWBI110019 ■ **5-SET** N/A ■ **8-SET** N/A ■
REPRO $1,096 ■ **CAD** $1,972 ■ **PDF** $1,096

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First Floor: 1,994 sq. ft. ■ Second Floor: 537 sq. ft. ■ Total: 2,531 sq. ft. ■ Bedrooms: 3 ■ Bathrooms: 2 1/2 ■ Dimensions: 50' - 0" X 77' - 6" ■ Foundation: Slab

PLAN # HWBI110020 ■ 5-SET N/A ■ 8-SET N/A ■
REPRO $1,266 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF $1,266

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A beautiful tile backsplash in the kitchen or bath not only protects your walls from heat and water damage, but also provides an eye-catching decorative focus that enhances the beauty of your cabinets and countertops. **Outwater**'s 100% Genuine Stone Tiles and 304 Grade Stainless Steel Metal Tiles, offered as a time- and cost-saving alternative to labor-intensive piecemeal fabrication, are hand sorted and individually adhered in mosaic or stacked patterns onto mesh backings to create seamless interlocking tiles that are easy to install using traditional methods, materials, and tools. Ideally suited for a wide range of applications, Outwater's Genuine Stone Tiles and 304 Grade Stainless Steel Metal Tiles are offered in numerous styles and colors.

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Speaking of products that help showcase your cabinets and countertops, hardwood is a very popular flooring choice in today's market because of wood's natural warmth and beauty. A stunning hardwood floor starts with an exotic hardwood like wenge or cocobolo, or a classic hardwood like oak, cherry, maple, mahogany, or even antique heart pine. All these types of wood are available from **M.L. Condon Co.** The company has a warehouse full of exceptional woods, literally hundreds of thousands of feet of quality lumber, ready to custom mill to your specifications.

During a construction project, protecting the client's existing or newly installed flooring from dirt and damage is essential. Poly-Craft Mask from **Pro-Tect** is the perfect, inexpensive solution for "Pro Tecting" hard surface finishes. Poly-Craft Mask is a three-ply product that includes a fiberglass meshing between a 40-pound craft paper and polyethylene sheet. The layer of poly won't allow spills to soak through, while the craft paper provides a soft cushion that won't scratch the surface you are protecting. The fiberglass meshing prevents the product from tearing, yet it can be cut with a knife for easy installation.

Pro-Tect

Continue reading through this special section on cabinets and countertops to learn about other fine products on the market today.

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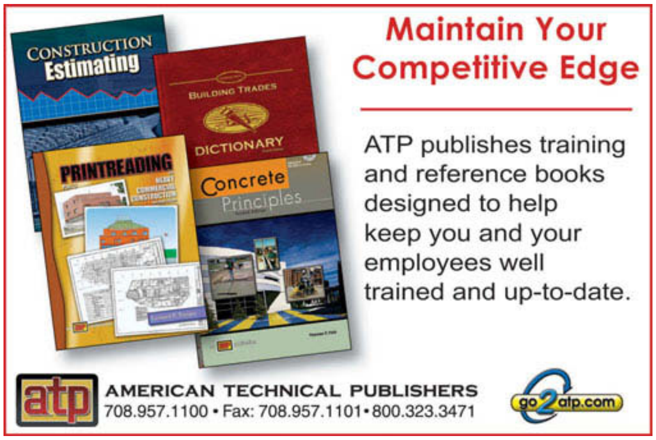
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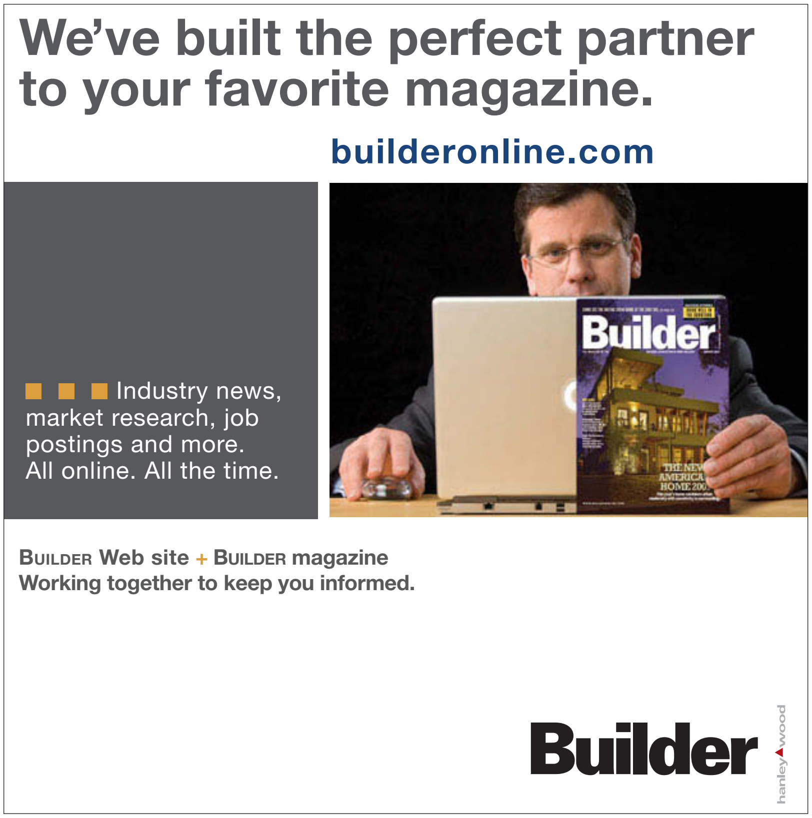
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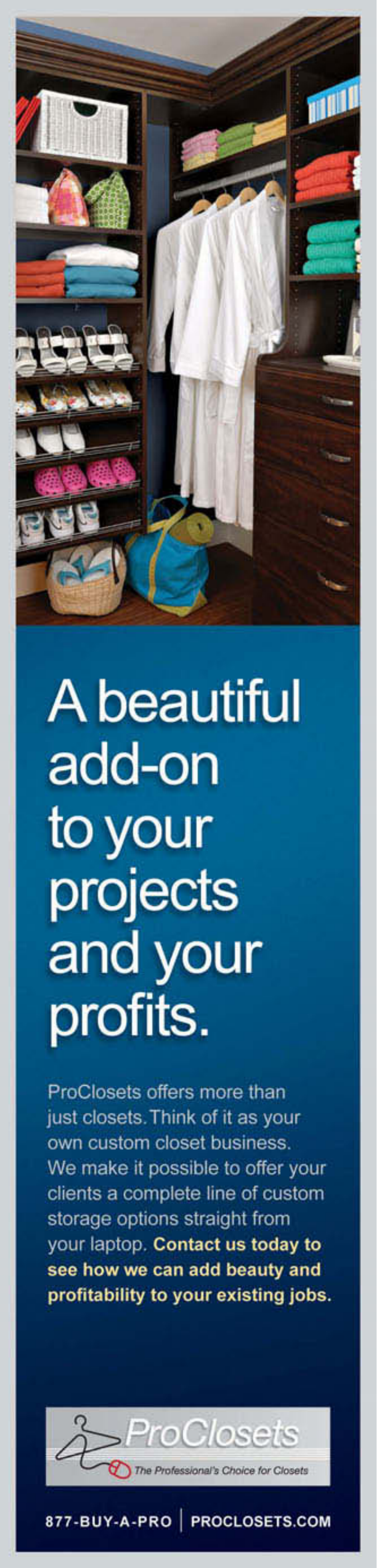
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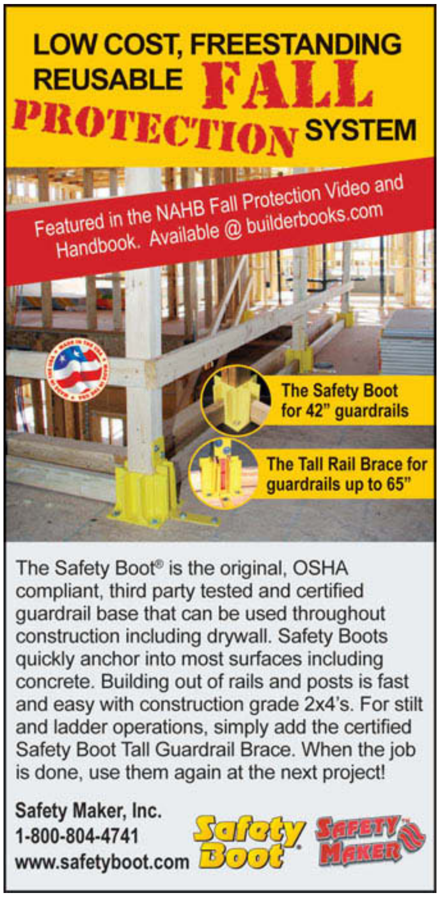

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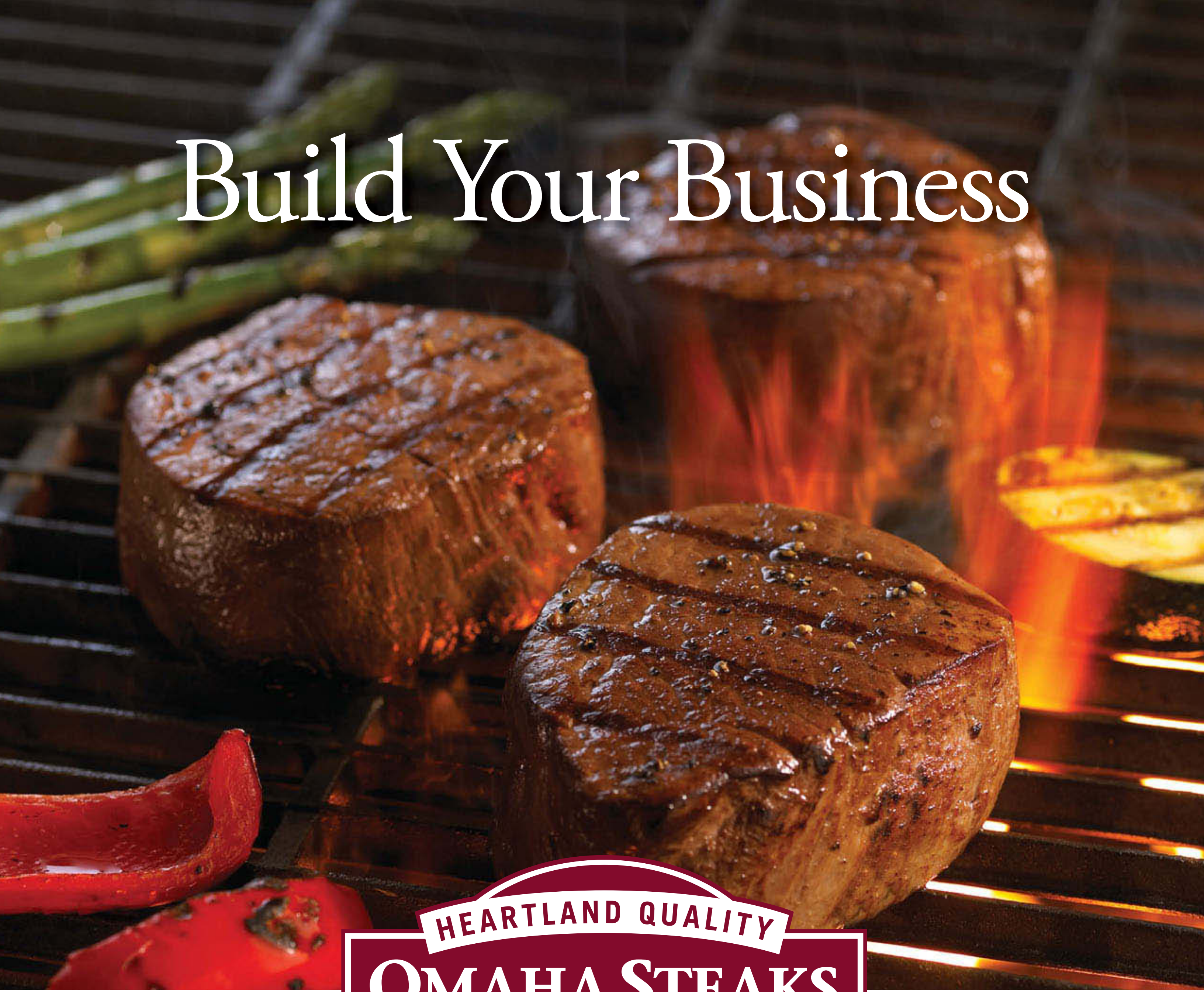

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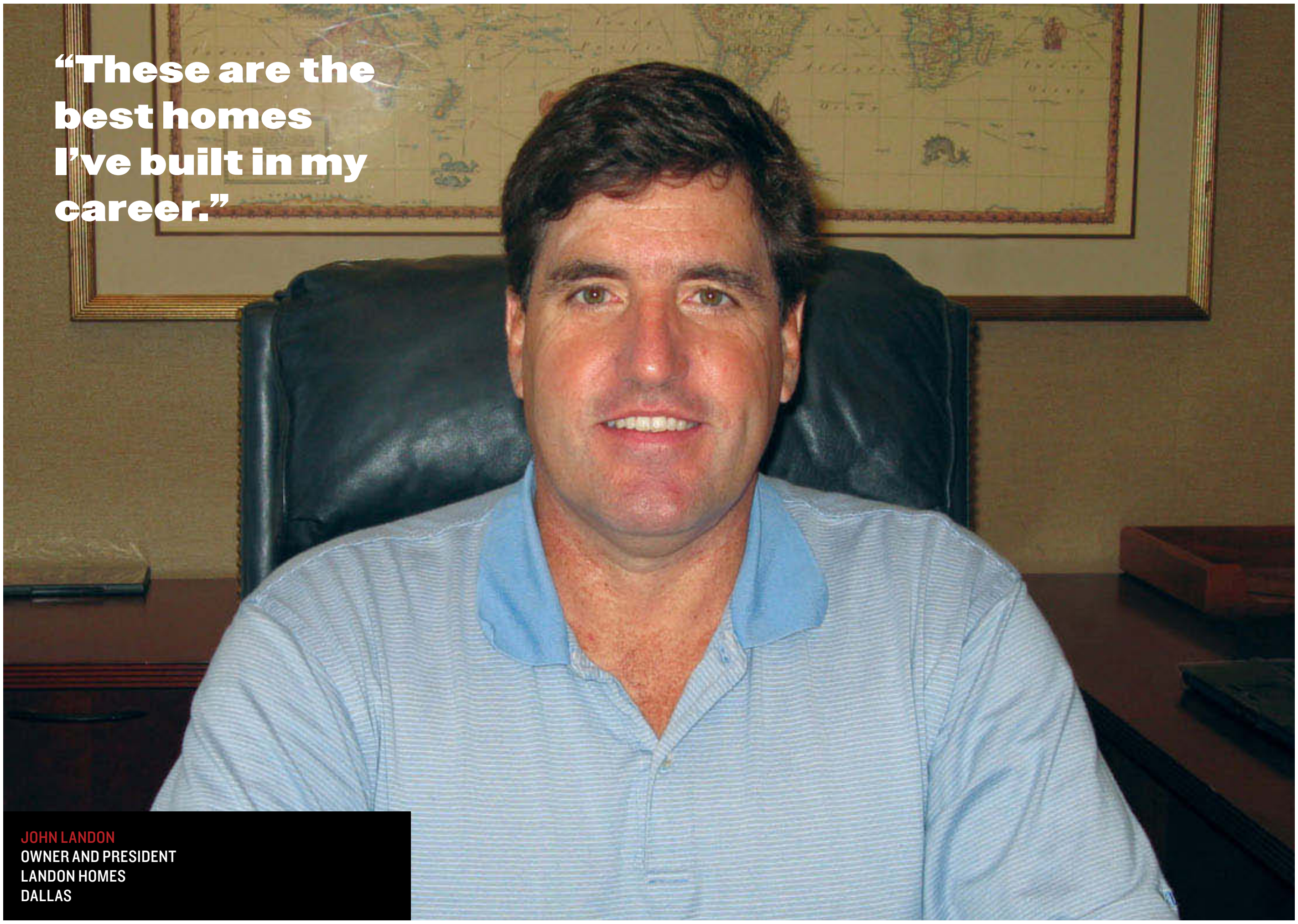

JOHN LANDON
OWNER AND PRESIDENT
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THIS MONTH MARKS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY of Dallas-based Landon Homes, the home builder started by John Landon, the former co-CEO of Meritage Homes, which itself was formed in 1996 when Landon merged his nine-year-old company, Legacy Homes, with Monterey Homes. Landon resigned suddenly from Meritage in May 2007, walking away with a $13.3 million compensation package and more than $52 million from the sale of his Meritage stock back to the company.

After a two-year hiatus, Landon, now 51, returned to his "passion" for home building, and his company should complete 100 homes in 2009. The builder's motto is "Better Built By Design," and Landon sees its opportunity in affordable, energy-efficient homes. Landon Homes controls enough land (much of it undeveloped) to build 1,000 homes.—*John Caulfield*

Q: What lured you back into home building?

A: I saw many similarities between now and 1987, when I started Legacy. Then, builders were going out of business, banks were failing, and the RTC [Resolution Trust Corp.] was going quite strong. How could anyone have imagined, rolling forward 20 years, things would be even more catastrophic?

Q: Your homes range from 1,700 to 4,600 square feet and are priced from the $160s to the mid $300s. What's different about them?

A: The value equation now is using technology to make houses more efficient to operate. All of our exterior walls are built using 2x6 construction, which allows for 57 percent more insulation. All of the headers are insulated, too. We refer to our houses as "hybrids," and tell customers they will immediately save $60 to $80 per month in energy bills. That's exciting.

Q: What mistakes must startup builders avoid?

A: Don't worry about how big you are, and be disciplined and focused on what you do best. Right-size the company, and keep it right-sized as you grow. And put yourself in a position to sell homes; many startups stay small because they aren't very good at marketing themselves.

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